

# THE UFO BOOK

Encyclopedia of the  
Extraterrestrial

JEROME CLARK

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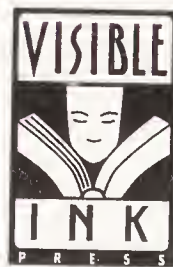
Encyclopedia of



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## the Extraterrestrial

JEROME CLARK



Detroit New York Toronto London

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## Encyclopedia of the Extraterrestrial

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In fond memory of  
D.R. Clark  
(1915-1980),  
who encouraged his sons  
to think for themselves



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**JEROME CLARK**, who has been following the UFO controversy for four decades, is editor of *International UFO Reporter*, the magazine of the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies. An internationally respected authority on the subject, he has written the award-winning, three-volume *UFO Encyclopedia* (1990-1996), *Unexplained!*, and other books. He lives in Minnesota.



# INTRODUCTION

## The UFO Phenomenon: A Historical Overview

The UFO phenomenon burst onto the world scene in the wake of a sighting made over the Cascade Mountains on June 24, 1947, when private pilot Kenneth Arnold spotted nine shiny discs moving in formation at a speed of more than 1200 mph. The sighting and those that immediately followed it, in the Pacific Northwest and elsewhere, inspired an anonymous headline writer to coin the phrase “flying saucers.” The more sober, Air Force-concocted term “unidentified flying objects” did not come into popular usage until the mid-1950s.

Phenomena that would have been called flying saucers or UFOs had they been reported much later began to show up in contemporary documents in the early years of the nineteenth century. The first great UFO wave occurred in the United States between late 1896 and the spring of 1897. The objects, dubbed “airships,” were generally thought to be somebody’s secret aviation breakthrough. Some speculation, not to mention several spectacular hoaxes, linked the manifestations to extraterrestrial visitors. Sightings of such things continued all over the world, but except for those who had directly experienced them, memories faded quickly, and typically each sighting was treated as a discrete event unrelated to any larger phenomenon.

The first writer to collect reports from a wide range of sources and locations, and to see them in broad context, was the American Charles Fort (1874-1932), author of what is arguably the first UFO book, *The Book of the Damned* (1919). Two other Fort books, *New Lands* (1923) and *Lo!* (1931), chronicled early UFO reports. During World War II UFOs were called “foo fighters.” The Allies suspected that they were devices built by the Axis powers, and the Axis powers held the opposite view. Secret Soviet missile firings were blamed, falsely as it turned out, for the “ghost rockets” that plagued northern Europe in 1946 and early 1947.

After the initiation of the modern UFO controversy in the summer of 1947 official investigations commenced, and the first books with “flying saucers” in their titles saw print in 1950. Speculation about UFOs became a national craze, with pop-



ular opinion divided between those who dismissed the phenomenon entirely (as the product of hysteria, hoaxes, and misperceptions) and those who saw it as of enormous potential significance. Some individuals became consumed with UFOs, and by the early 1950s the first UFO organizations were formed. Most were little more than saucer fan clubs, but several were disciplined, intellectually serious, and capable of sophisticated investigation and analysis. These “ufologists,” as they called themselves, looked askance at an emerging occult-religious movement led by “contactees,” who were claiming direct communication with benevolent Space Brothers and whose eccentric beliefs and antics only compounded the ridicule already surrounding the UFO question.

By the mid-1950s the Air Force’s Project Blue Book, following recommendations laid down by a CIA-sponsored scientific committee (known as the Robertson panel, after its head, physicist H. P. Robertson), had become no more than a debunking exercise. It conducted little real investigation even as it rendered regular negative judgments on the UFO reports that came to its attention. Many who took a skeptical view of the official pronouncements suspected that the Air Force was covering up big UFO secrets, and from 1957 onward the Washington-based National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP), led by author, retired Marine Corps major, and prominent UFO proponent Donald E. Keyhoe, pushed vigorously for congressional hearings and challenged the Air Force at every point.

At the end of the decade, elite opinion had turned against the notion that UFOs might represent anything of consequence. With this marginalization of the subject, few scientists found it prudent to associate themselves with it, at least publicly, and mainstream media treatments of UFO stories tended to the jocular. Popular fascination remained nonetheless, and puzzling sightings continued to occur. UFO organizations such as NICAP and the Aerial Phenomena Research Association (APRO) argued for the reality of UFOs as technological vehicles piloted by biological entities, presumably from other solar systems.

UFO waves—periods of intense sighting activity—would erupt with alarming frequency between 1964 and 1973. Daylight discs and radar/visual cases would fade into the background as ufologists turned their attention to experiential claims of staggering strangeness. For a growing number of UFO students, extraterrestrial theories no longer sufficed, and parapsychological—and often openly occult—approaches shoved aside speculations about spaceships. Many “new ufologists,” as they first styled themselves, sought to link UFOs with ghosts, poltergeists, monsters, and folkloric phenomena. The abduction phenomenon, essentially unknown to first-generation ufologists, rose to prominence.

Scientific interest in the UFO question was revived, in no small part because of the efforts of astronomer J. Allen Hynek. For many years the Air Force’s chief scientific advisor on UFOs and an adherent of the skeptical party line, Hynek finally stepped forth to criticize Blue Book’s shortcomings and to argue forcefully for a serious new look. University of Arizona atmospheric physicist James E. McDonald



threw himself into the thick of the controversy; he vigorously investigated cases and excoriated his scientific colleagues' refusal to consider the evidence for extraterrestrial visitation. Astronomer and computer scientist Jacques Vallee, who had been one of Hynek's graduate students at Northwestern University, wrote two scientific books on UFOs before becoming one of the two leading proponents (John A. Keel being the other) of the suddenly fashionable occult ufology.

Meanwhile the Air Force handed its UFO problem, long a public-relations disaster, over to the University of Colorado and to physicist Edward U. Condon. Within months the "Condon Committee," its informal title, was embroiled in controversy and embarrassing publicity, amid charges that the (negative) conclusion to its allegedly objective inquiry into the UFO phenomenon had been arrived at before the investigation began. In January 1969 the committee's bulky formal report opened with an introduction which declared that no further investigation of UFOs was justified; those who read past the introduction found that a third of the cases reviewed in the text remained unexplained. Of course few readers got past the introduction, and to the casually interested it looked as if no mystery remained. Later that year Project Blue Book closed down, and public interest plummeted.

It would come to life again in the fall of 1973, as a wave of dramatic encounters broke in October. That same year Hynek co-founded, with Chicago-area businessman-ufologist Sherman J. Larsen, the Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS), to provide an organizational structure through which scientists and other sober investigators could examine cases, review data, and publish findings. The mid-1970s also saw the rise of an organized debunking movement, intended to counter the growing popular interest in UFOs and other heterodox notions. Within ufology itself neoskeptical approaches—championed, ironically, by individuals who had begun as paranormal theorists—coalesced into the "psychosocial" school; to the psychosociologists, UFO encounters are a modern form of traditional visionary experience.

Yet as the investigations grew ever more sophisticated, both lay ufologists and scientists working on their own or with professional organizations uncovered new evidence for a physical dimension to the UFO phenomenon. For all that the period was obsessed with UFO claims of the highest strangeness (and often the lowest probative value), it also saw its share of hard-evidence cases, including such destined-to-be-classic close encounters of the second kind as the Delphos, Kansas, and Marshall County, Minnesota, cases.

In the late 1970s several American ufologists reopened the long-closed question of "crash/retrievals," once disparaged as tall tales of "little men in pickle jars." Veteran ufologist Leonard H. Stringfield led the way, collecting and compiling anecdotes from sources of varying or indeterminate credibility. But in the new climate two ufologists, Stanton T. Friedman and William L. Moore, were encouraged to start the long, complicated probe of the now-famous Roswell incident. The effort would stretch all the way into the 1990s and involve other investigators, not the least of them a powerful congressional agency, the General Accounting Office,

which would find that nearly all official records of the event are missing. The Air Force would launch its own investigation and attempt to tie the event to secret balloon experiments.

The 1980s saw a revival of interest, at least among American ufologists, both in the extraterrestrial hypothesis and in the issue of alleged official cover-ups. The decade also hosted an almost unprecedented number of hoaxes, many involving bogus documents which purported to be internal memoranda from official agencies holding extraterrestrial hardware and bodies. The most notorious of these was one allegedly prepared for President-elect Eisenhower by a supersecret "Operation Majestic-12," formed in September 1947 in the wake of the Roswell crash. Speculations about space visitors and government concealment gave birth to the Dark Side movement, a subculture which fused unrestrained paranoia and far-right conspiracy theory into a nightmarish vision of a malevolent Washington in collusion with sinister extraterrestrials in a plot to enslave the human race.

At the same time the decade brought important UFO cases such as a flood of sightings over Westchester and other counties around New York City, an encounter by a Japanese Airlines cargo plane off the coast of Alaska, and a well-investigated physical-trace case from Trans-en-Provence, France. The abduction phenomenon rose to prominence, largely through the writings and investigations of Budd Hopkins, and played an ever larger role in discussions about the nature and meaning of the UFO phenomenon. Reports and photographs from Gulf Breeze, Florida, ignited a furious controversy which would continue well into the 1990s.

\* \* \*

Midway through the UFO era, in the latter half of the 1960s, the controversy was transformed in many ways from a debate about aerial phenomena into one about experiences at ground level. Close encounters dominated the UFO-reporting of the period as much as daylight discs and nocturnal lights had defined the previous 15 to 20 years. Moreover, the strangeness of these claims seemed to escalate. Many ufologists lost their bearings. The distinction between a hoaxter's tall tale and a frightened witness' sincere testimony blurs when the content of one is barely less outlandish than the other. Both shameless liars and earnest souls told of meetings, sometimes with extended communication, with alien humanoids. Some claimed to have had sexual experiences with extraterrestrials. Other persons spoke, falsely or sincerely, of sightings of hairy or winged creatures or of menacing men in black.

Ordinarily we do not draw a distinction between experiences and events. We human beings tend to think that either things happen or they don't, and if they happen, they happen in the world. Events that happen in the world comprise what we may call event-level reality, occurrences amenable to consensual acceptance via traditional methods of scientific documentation. If someone sees something that is not an image from a dream or a hallucination or a misperception, that thing—so we assume implicitly—exists in the world. Certainly, where UFOs are concerned, an object that shows up on radar or leaves anomalous traces on the ground where



it was seen to land may be assumed to exist in the world. Cases like these comprise the core of the evidence for the proposition that UFOs are both physical and extraordinary.

No comparable evidence exists for the reality of many of the high-strangeness phenomena readers will encounter in the pages to follow. These things “exist” only in memory and testimony. Of course this hardly makes them less puzzling, since the memories and testimonies often seemed irreducible to conventional interpretation. Medically—as opposed to popularly—defined, hallucinations are confined, according to psychologist Graham Reed (author of *The Psychology of Anomalous Experience* [1988]), to “people who are suffering from mental disorder or delirium due to physical health.” Relatively few witnesses answer to this description.

We lack the vocabulary that would permit us to discuss these matters with precision. We do possess the technical tools to judge the value and meaning of physical evidence, and we can cite correlations between UFO data and current scientific thinking about the possible nature of advanced extraterrestrial civilizations. Yet we cannot always explain how something that seems entirely real on an experience level may not be real on an event level. Of experiences with exotic entities, all we can say about them is that it is possible to experience them. Both rationalist and magical “explanations” only beg the question, presuming to knowledge not currently available to us.

Most high-strangeness phenomena are evidence of nothing so much as our ignorance, or of our constricted view of the possibilities of human experience. These modern correlates of traditional supernatural belief confirm—as any careful reader of folklore texts will have already learned—that such beliefs were as often as not experientially based. The experiences, moreover, were generally shaped by cultural assumption and expectation. These experiential phenomena, though deeply anomalous in themselves, do not tell us—as appearances would lead us to believe—that fairies live under rocks, merfolk dwell in the oceans, monsters haunt rural America, or some of our fellow citizens have flown to other worlds in spaceships. Many ufologists nonetheless have labored to fashion a geography of the supernatural from just such testimony when it took on, if sometimes only inferentially, a ufological coloration. In some ways some ufologists have argued their case from their weakest evidence. Having once hoped to be scientists, they now retreat into demonology.

The image of the daylight disc, coupled with speculation about extraterrestrial visitation (right or wrong, a reasonable reading of the most evidential UFO reports), has provided a cultural framework in which contemporary versions of the experience anomalies to which human beings have always been susceptible have evolved. But these experience anomalies probably are not a part of the UFO phenomenon; the relation between the two is only a symbiotic one. And yet because we know relatively little about the nature of the primary stimulus (the UFO phenomenon), except that it has a physical dimension which can be demonstrated

under the right circumstances, we cannot easily distinguish where precisely the event phenomenon and its experiential correlate end and begin. The problem is particularly acute in those reports known as close encounters of the third kind—a broad category which contains everything from simple accounts of briefly glimpsed humanoids (as in the highly evidential Socorro, New Mexico, case) to complex narratives of interstellar voyages with extraterrestrial crews, and just about every kind of alleged occurrence between.

This is not the place to pursue these questions at length, but it is a good place to stress this point: that in the entries that follow, when I take note of a claimant's apparent sanity and sincerity notwithstanding his or her bizarre testimony, I *do not* mean to imply that this testimony, absent compelling supporting evidence, ought to be taken as a literal description of a consensus-reality event or breathing entity. All I mean to suggest is that to all appearances the claimant believed something extraordinary had happened to him or her. For all we know, the experience may have "happened" in some indeterminate realm between the real and the imagined, or in some profoundly anomalous mental state about which conventional psychology yet knows little. In any case, most of the extreme experiential claims you will read in the pages ahead amount to certain proof neither of aliens nor of madness (nor, as far as that goes, of the prevalence of liars in the population).

What do they amount to? We would all be better off if, when the occasion called for it, we pretended to no false authority but instead boldly uttered three one-syllable words seldom heard in the five decades of the UFO controversy: We don't know. Except in those instances where good reason exists to doubt an informant's sincerity, *The UFO Book* operates on the assumption that intellectual agnosticism, rather than its alternatives (occultism on one hand, reductionism on the other), is the wisest course.

\* \* \*

*The UFO Book* is an abridgement of a much larger, two-volume work, *The UFO Encyclopedia* (second edition), published in the fall of 1997 by Omnigraphics, Inc. Readers seeking fuller discussions of matters dealt with here, as well as many other issues related to the controversy, will find them in this larger volume. In the present book we have focused our attention on the crucial cases, phenomena, theories, beliefs, research projects, personalities, hoaxes, and more. In the process we touch on virtually every important aspect of the UFO story.

I have written all but four of the entries that follow. Thomas E. Bullard, Ph.D., a folklorist and author of many scholarly monographs and papers on ufological issues, prepared "Abduction Phenomenon" and "Anomalous Aerial Phenomena Before 1800." Michael D. Swords, Ph.D., professor of natural sciences at Western Michigan University, contributed "Extraterrestrial Hypothesis and Science." Swords, the former editor of ufology's one refereed publication, *Journal of UFO Studies*, is working on his own history of the UFO controversy. Bill Chalker, who lives in Sydney, Australia, and is employed as a chemist in private industry, wrote



"Valentich Disappearance." He has written a book on UFO sightings in his own country, *The Oz Files* (1996). I am, of course, deeply grateful to all of them for their generous assistance and splendid work.

I have made much use of the considerable holdings of the Chicago-based J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS), on whose board I serve, along with Drs. Bullard and Swords, and whose *International UFO Reporter*, now published quarterly, I have edited since 1985. In CUFOS' library the searcher will find—in addition to hundreds of books and thousands of issues of often obscure UFO periodicals—Project Blue Book's records, along with the bulging files of NICAP (the premier UFO group of the late 1950s and 1960s) and of other defunct organizations. There are also the private papers of J. Allen Hynek and other important figures in UFO history, thousands of letters, case reports, technical monographs, newspaper clippings, tape recordings, photographs, and more. I have also drawn on my private collection, an accumulation of materials from my four decades' worth of interest in the UFO phenomenon.

Special mention should be made of my CUFOS colleague George M. Eberhart's two-volume *UFOs and the Extraterrestrial Contact Movement* (Scarecrow Press, 1986). This comprehensive bibliography of books, monographs, magazine pieces, and journal papers from the nonspecialist literature is an indispensable guide to anyone who dares to chase UFOs down the paper trail. Another valuable resource is Loren E. Gross's *UFOs: A History*, a series of privately published monographs which chronicle the subject almost day by day up through, so far, 1957. J. L. Aldrich of Project 1947, a monumental research effort devoted to the recovery of documents from early UFO history, generously shared materials gleaned from his extensive diggings into archives all across North America. I eagerly await the book Aldrich intends to write.

I continue to have the good fortune of working with one of the world's greatest copy editors, Helene Henderson. I also wish to thank the good people at Visible Ink Press, especially Rebecca Nelson and Terri Schell, for their belief, support, and perseverance. These friends, colleagues, and informants have in one way or another helped make this book possible: John Ackerman, Janet Bord, Peter Brookesmith, Hilary Evans, Lucius Farish, Stanton T. Friedman, the late Curtis and Mary Margaret Fuller, Barry Greenwood, Richard Hall, Richard Heiden, Betty Hill, Richard T. Holder, Budd Hopkins, David M. Jacobs, Kal K. Korff, Pierre Lagrange, Shannon McGinn, Bruce Maccabee, J. Gordon Melton, Simone Mendez, William L. Moore, James W. Moseley, Karl T. Pflock, Kevin D. Randle, Jenny Randles, Frank John Reid, Mark Rodeghier, Gregory Sandow, R. Leo Sprinkle, Dennis Stacy, the late Gordon Stein, John P. Timmerman, Marcello Truzzi, David Vassar, Walter N. Webb, Fred Whiting, and Jennie Zeidman.

Jerome Clark  
Minnesota  
May 1997



# A NOTE ABOUT UFO TERMINOLOGY

**I**n *The UFO Book* I have used terms that are in the vocabulary of all ufologists and, with the exception of (thanks to Steven Spielberg) “close encounters of the third kind,” not very many other people. One of these words is “ufologists.” Ufologists are persons who study the UFO phenomenon, and ufology (yoo-FAHL-uh-gee) is the study of the UFO phenomenon. Many ufologists prefer to speak of the “UFO phenomenon,” which undeniably exists (as reports of UFOs), rather than “UFOs,” which may or may not exist as a class of anomalous phenomena presumably of unearthly origin. When referring to the concept of UFOs in its broadest sense, I have tried as much as possible to use the phrase *UFO phenomenon*. (Incidentally, those who think UFOs exist and are otherworldly spacecraft are called proponents of the “extraterrestrial hypothesis,” often shortened to ETH.)

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Other terms are self-explanatory. Daylight discs, another expression from ufological jargon, are objects, apparently metallic, apparently structured, and obviously disc-shaped, which are observed between dawn and dusk. Nocturnal lights are what people report at other times of the day. Nocturnal lights are the kinds of ostensible UFOs that investigation is most likely to turn into IFOs—identified flying objects, the sorts of mundane stimuli (airplanes, planets, stars, meteors, weather balloons, satellite debris, and the like) that people mistake for something more interesting. Nonetheless genuinely anomalous nocturnal lights, often performing fantastic aerial gymnastics, have been reported on numerous occasions. Radar/visual cases are those, of course, in which UFOs are picked up on radar and seen by the eye.

In his book *The UFO Experience* (1972) the late Dr. J. Allen Hynek devised a classification system for close encounters. Despite occasional efforts to change or modify it, the categories have been accepted by virtually all ufologists and UFO writers, including this one:

*Close encounters of the first kind (CE1s):* The appearance of a UFO within 500 feet or less of the witness.



*Close encounters of the second kind (CE2s):* Incidents in which a UFO affects the environment in some way, for example by scorching vegetation, leaving landing traces, burning or otherwise injuring witnesses. In a CE2, in Hynek's words, a UFO has a "measurable physical effect on either animate or inanimate matter."

*Close encounters of the third kind (CE3s):* reports of beings, usually humanoid, in connection with UFO sightings. One subset of CE3s is the abduction experience, in which persons allegedly are taken against their will into UFOs and subjected by their humanoid occupants to physical tests or experiments before they are released, in two cases out of three with some sort of memory impairment; memory may return later through hypnotic regression or spontaneous recall.

Contactees, not to be confused with abductees, are individuals who claim to be in frequent communication with wise, beautiful, godlike beings from other worlds here to save earthlings from destroying themselves. These contacts may take place physically or (far more frequently) psychically. Contactees tend to be individuals with a long history of involvement in occultism and metaphysics. Most contactees are sincere followers of a visionary religious response to the UFO phenomenon. In contact claims older occult doctrines are wrapped in Space Age garb.

One additional note: terms, names, places, and incidents that are bolded within the text of an entry are given detailed treatment within a full entry elsewhere in the book. Consult the Table of Contents for further information.



# A

## ABDUCTION PHENOMENON

1

**I**n a field crowded with strange stories, abductions top the UFO strangeness scale. Abduction reports tell of alien entities that capture humans from their bedrooms, vehicles, or open air, transport the captives inside a UFO, and subject them to a bizarre physical examination before returning them to the capture site. Abductees seldom remember many details of their captivity but find an inexplicable period of "missing time" and a haunting sensation that something happened. These reports combine the testimony of people too credible to doubt with descriptions too fantastic to believe. For 30 years ufologists have investigated abductions, and they remain among the most hotly disputed claims in ufology.

The first abduction to receive widespread publicity came from Barney and Betty Hill, a New Hampshire couple of impeccable reputation, who drove home from a vacation trip one night in September 1961. A distant light grew nearer, enlarging into a pancake-shaped object with a row of windows. Through binoculars Barney saw figures inside and drove off in terror as one being stared down at him with compelling eyes. The object closed in, and the Hills heard a beeping sound, repeated soon after, by which time the UFO had disappeared. They reached home about dawn and later realized that the trip had taken about two hours longer than it should have. Betty suffered nightmares, and Barney's ulcers troubled him until he sought help from Boston psychiatrist Benjamin Simon.

Under hypnosis the Hills recalled the extraordinary events of their two missing hours, the time between the two sets of beeps. Entities about five feet tall with large hairless heads, gray skin, and large slanted eyes stopped the car and escorted the Hills to the landed UFO. The Hills submitted to a medical examination that included a needle in the abdomen for Betty, who also saw a star map on the wall. The leader warned the Hills to forget the experience, and their memories began to fade even as they watched the UFO take off and resumed their drive. Millions of people read the Hills's story in a 1966 book, John G. Fuller's *The Interrupted Journey* (see **Hill Abduction Case**).

Only one other little-known claim preceded the Hill case. The captive was Antonio Villas-Boas, a young Brazilian who reported in February 1958 that one night four months earlier, a UFO landed and several short beings dragged him inside to take a blood sample. An almost-human female then had sexual relations with him (see **Sex and UFOs**). This story, too sensational for the 1950s, was suppressed by the few ufologists who knew about it, until the Hill case provided a degree of confirmation.

Abduction claims remained rare in the decade after the Hill case. Nebraska police officer Herbert Schirmer recounted an abduction under hypnosis in 1967 (see **Schirmer Abduction Case**), while several cases emerged during the great wave of October 1973 (see **Pascagoula Abduction Case**). The next case to garner national publicity came from Arizona on November 5, 1975, when six woodcutters reported that a co-worker, Travis Walton, had disappeared after approaching a hovering UFO. Five days later Walton reappeared, confused and dehydrated, with fragmentary memories of small gray beings with large eyes, tall blond humans, and a vast hangarlike room full of UFOs (see **Walton Abduction Case**).

By the end of 1975 people began coming forward to report abductions old and new. One spectacular case investigated by veteran ufologist Raymond E. Fowler in 1976 concerned Betty Andreasson, a Massachusetts housewife taken from her home in 1967, with partial confirmation from her father and eldest daughter. She reported that short gray humanoids with large heads and eyes passed ghostlike through a closed door, placed her family in suspended animation, and carried her off for an examination and a journey to a strange, unearthly place. The examination included removal of a tiny object from her nostril, the first indication that the abductors inserted implants into their captives. She later recalled a lifetime of encounters. About the same time California investigators Ann Druffel and D. Scott Rogo explored 25 years of ongoing UFO experiences among a group of women, friends whose abduction experiences seemed to spread among them like a contagion. Cases from England, Australia, Europe, and Latin America affirmed that the phenomenon was not unique to North America.

By 1980 some few dozen abduction reports were published in the literature. This slender file began to swell when New York artist Budd Hopkins began the investigations that led to his seminal 1981 book *Missing Time*. The case of "Steven Kilburn" was typical among Hopkins's abductions. Kilburn was a young man with faint memories of an object in the sky and anxieties about a certain stretch of road.



Hopkins suspected that these conscious memories represented merely the tip of the iceberg, and with the help of a psychologist trained in hypnosis, an abduction scenario emerged in which short, large-eyed humanoids paralyzed Kilburn and took him inside a UFO for a physical examination. As Hopkins explored stories from other individuals with such indirect symptoms as memory loss for an hour or two, anxiety associated with a place, or emotional reaction to large-eyed animals, he uncovered a stream of abductions where other investigators felt lucky to find one or two in a decade. Whatever else abductions were, they were no longer rarities.

Abductions claimed pride of place in ufological interest during the 1980s, with the climax coming in 1987. That year Hopkins published a second book, *Intruders*, telling the story of an Indianapolis woman, "Kathie Davis," who experienced recurrent abductions throughout her lifetime. In one encounter the beings impregnated her, then returned a few months later to remove the fetus. Several years later the beings introduced her to a frail little girl, apparently half human and half alien, and told her this girl was her daughter. At the same time popular horror-fiction writer Whitley Strieber gave a gripping account of his several abductions and examinations in *Communion*, a book long on the bestseller list and graced with the cover illustration of a large-eyed alien, now so familiar that millions of people expect aliens to show this face.

If the first decade of abductions established the presence of a mystery and the second decade established its prevalence, the third decade witnessed a struggle for understanding. The reports continued to accumulate—some 300 in the literature up to 1985 nearly tripled by 1992. Several abductees turned author in the 1990s and told their own stories, while cases with multiple witnesses have occupied several key investigators. Media fascination with the subject has led to movies based on the Strieber, Walton, and Kathie Davis cases, innumerable television interviews and presentations, and a stream of advertisements, cartoons, tabloid tales, and T-shirt designs. Scholarly interest in the subject attracted Harvard psychiatrist John E. Mack, who published *Abduction* in 1994, and academic articles have appeared in the *Journal of UFO Studies* as well as in a growing number of mainstream psychological journals. Several scholarly conferences have treated the subject, culminating in 1992 with the Abduction Study Conference Held at MIT, a five-day meeting of some 150 academics, professionals, and experiencers recorded in *Alien Discussions*, a volume of proceedings some 700 pages long.

**Abductees and their stories.** Even with only a few cases to compare, ufologists realized that abduction reports shared striking similarities in events and descriptive content. Comparative work by Thomas E. Bullard, David M. Jacobs, and Dan Wright systematized the study of abduction content and confirmed the repetitiveness of abduction stories. How closely the proportions correspond can be seen on the next two pages in tables 1 and 2. The data are derived from Bullard's two studies—the 1987 percentages drawn from 103 high-information, high-reliability cases taken from the literature, the 1995 percentages provided by a survey of 13 abduction investigators based on their experience with some 1700 cases.



TABLE 1

Story Event		1987	1995
<b>I. Capture</b>		100%	
Restlessness, anxiety, premonition that something strange will happen		34	32
UFO appears		60	45
Vacuum effect, stillness, silence, absence of traffic		22	24
Paralysis, creeping lethargy		50	55
Missing time (loss of memory)		88	44
Full consciousness maintained		8	7
Beings appear		68	
Abductee floats or feels sensation of floating		36	37
Abductee enters craft suddenly or with momentary memory lapse		46	48
<b>II. Examination</b>		70	68
Abductee lies on examination table		77*	
Manual inspection (beings touch body or use handheld instruments)		37*	42
Eyelike device scans abductee		49*	
Instrumental examination (devices probe abductee's body)		34*	30
Beings take samples of blood or other bodily materials		29*	31
Reproductive examination, removal of genetic materials		24*	24
Implant inserted or removed; close attention to head		37*	45
<b>III. Conference</b>		46	38
Beings show abductee images of cataclysm		17*	19
Assignment of task or mission		32*	26
Warning against some human activity (e.g., environmental damage)		23*	29
<b>IV. Tour of Ship</b>		13	28
Visit to incubatorium, nursery			16
<b>V. Journey or Otherworldly Journey</b>		27	24
View of barren, desertlike, dim, or devastated landscape		30*	
View of bright, lush landscape that seems enclosed or underground		38*	
<b>VI. Theophany (spiritual experience, observation of ritual)</b>		9	9
<b>VII. Return</b>			
Beings say farewell or impart final message		23	20
Abductee sad to leave, feeling of rapture		17*	28
Abductee leaves the craft suddenly or with momentary memory lapse		33	
<b>VIII. Aftermath</b>		71	
Immediate or short-term aftereffects reported		48*	
Eyes irritated, watering, burning		18*	18
Dehydration, unusual thirst		11*	20
Dizziness, headache, problems with motility, balance		18*	17
Cuts, cars, puncture wounds		10*	37
Intermediate aftereffects reported		61*	
Vague anxieties, fear of specific situations (e.g., doctor's office)		15*	31
Nightmares, sleep disturbance		34*	36
Long-term aftereffects reported		63*	
Encounters with Men in Black		15*	14
Experiences with apparitions, poltergeist phenomena		33*	
ESP develops, psychic experiences increase		18*	39
Changes in interests, habits, personality, lifestyle		19*	28
Additional abductions, UFO sightings, entity encounters		55*	62

\* = percentages calculated from cases that include descriptions of the appropriate category, not from the full sample of cases.

In cases where percentages do not appear, no data was available.



TABLE 2

Story Elements	1987	1995
<b>Circumstances</b>		
Taken from bedroom	23%	57%
Taken from vehicle	43	26
Abduction lasts 1-2 hours	36	43
Abduction lasts more than 2 hours	39	21
First abduction after age 35	21	14
<b>Type of Being</b>		
Beings are humanoid in form	78	76
Beings are short gray ("standard") humanoids	56*	66
Beings are short to average height	77*	74
Tall humanoids	23*	20
Nordic beings (tall, blond, graceful, attractive humans)	8	10
Hybrids (human-humanoid mix)		16
Monsters, oddities, robots, apes	6	7
<b>Description of Humanoid Beings</b>		
	83	
Head large, pear-shaped, with narrow or pointed chin	69*	74
Hairless	80	
Large eyes	84*	81
Eyes slanted, almond, "Egyptian," or wrap-around in shape	77*	
Nose is vestigial—holes only, slight protrusion, or nothing	79*	81
Ears are vestigial—holes, small structure, or nothing	74*	84
Mouth is small, lipless, a slit	94*	92
Skin is gray, pallid, white, ashen	86*	
Body build is thin, frail, lacking in musculature	62*	
Clothing is one-piece, coverall, jumpsuitlike	80*	
<b>Behaviors of Beings</b>		
Communicate with abductee by telepathy	83*	84
Control abductee with instructions to forget, coercive reassurances	42	48
One being serves as leader or liaison	80*	
One being (usually the leader) seems more caring than the rest	43	43
Beings behave in a cold, businesslike way toward the abductee	59	62
Beings are warm and considerate	15	14
Beings are polite and reassuring, but perhaps manipulative, insincere	53	48
<b>The Craft</b>		
UFO, object, or light recalled without hypnosis	73	
UFO is disk, domed, or Saturn-shaped	57*	59
Interior includes examination room	83*	86
Examination room is round, domed, smooth	84*	75
Examination room is square, wedge, or pie-shaped	16*	14
Lighting is diffuse, indirect, fluorescent	74	67
Atmosphere is chilly, damp, misty	59*	62
Examination room contains bed, table, or recliner	81*	82

# ABDUCTION PHENOMENON

\* = percentages calculated from cases that include descriptions of the appropriate category, not from the full sample of cases.

In cases where percentages do not appear, no data was available.



The education of abductees in these two samples varies from high school or less to university and professional degrees. Employment ranges from unskilled labor to white-collar and professional workers. Males predominate in the 1987 sample, while the 1995 sample contains slightly more females, though the overall abductee population appears close to 50-50. Abductees appear to be a cross-section of society without the distinction of any obvious telltale characteristics. Reports come from people of all ages, from young children to the elderly, but one surprising pattern is a dropoff in the rate of abduction for individuals past age 35. Few people experience a first abduction beyond this age.

80-90% of abductions happen at night to single individuals. In the early days most reports came from people captured while they drove in remote areas, but now the most common account tells of beings intruding into the bedroom and removing the captive to a UFO. Encounters may last from 20 minutes to five days, but one to three hours is the usual duration.

A fixed sequence of events recurs from one abduction report to another. The story consists of eight possible episodes—capture, examination, conference, tour of the ship, journey or otherworldly journey, theophany, return, and aftermath. Few reports contain every possible episode, but when it appears, it usually assumes the same relative position. That is, examination precedes conference, and conference precedes otherworldly journey. Fidelity to this sequence characterizes 84 of the 103 reports in the 1987 study.

This rigid order extends to events in the capture, examination, and return episodes as well. In a sequence of escalating strangeness, the subject sees a UFO in the sky or a light streaming into the bedroom window, then notices a stillness or silence, then begins to lose volition and mental control as paralysis or uncharacteristic behaviors take over. Beings appear and escort the abductee to the craft, often with a sense of floating off the ground. Entry into the ship is frequently sudden or, often, the occasion for a momentary lapse of consciousness.

The examination begins soon after entry, as though the beings are impatient to carry it out. The captive lies on a table while a party of beings performs a manual examination by poking or touching the abductee from head to toe, with either fingers or handheld instruments. An eyelike lens or X-ray device scans the captive's body; then the beings may attach tubes or wires and collect samples of blood, skin, hair, or other bodily materials. A key element of the examination is inspection of the reproductive organs, a process that may include extraction of sperm from males and apparent removal of eggs from females by means of a needle inserted into the abdomen. Only the reproductive and neurological systems seem of interest to the examiners. They may insert or remove a tiny implant from the head or spine of abductees, and a being may stare intently into their eyes. Performance tests or staged psychodramas presenting illusory scenes may follow as an apparent way to probe human emotions and behaviors.

Examinations progress with businesslike, even ruthless efficiency. Afterwards the beings relax and sometimes converse with the captive or draw him or her into a formal conference. Sometimes informative or instructive, conferences often include a message warning of some future cataclysm such as ecological collapse, while abductees sometimes understand that they are learning to perform a future mission of an unclear nature.

The remaining shipboard episodes are much less common than examinations or conferences. The captive may tour the ship, and in the past decade these tours may include a visit to an incubatorium where fetuslike forms float in jars or tanks, or a nursery with cradles containing small, sickly babies. The beings encourage abductees to touch and hold the listless infants, or to interact with older, seemingly hybrid children. Abductees may observe an otherworldly environment, either dim and desolate or lush and green under a bright but sunless sky. On rare occasions the onboard experiences close with observation of or participation in a scene of religious, spiritual, or ritualistic significance.

Returning from the abduction usually reverses the capture, though the beings may wish the captive farewell and promise to meet again. Feelings of joy and rapture or a sadness at having to leave are common among abductees at this time. Replaced in bed, the abductee goes back to sleep; reentering his or her car, the abductee drives off. In both cases everything that happened since early in the capture sequence fades out of mind to leave only a vague and troubling impression that something strange occurred.

The aftermath of abduction divides into three stages. Immediate aftereffects last for days or weeks and are mostly physical, such as irritated eyes, unusual thirst, scooplke cuts, nausea, nosebleed, or sunburn. Intermediate aftereffects set in weeks or months later and are largely psychological, with nightmares and flashbacks common, as is an obsession to return to the abduction site or anxiety when passing such a spot. Specific situations like a doctor's office or the sight of a large-eyed animal may provoke a panic attack incomprehensible to the subject before recalling the examination room of the UFO or the large eyes of the beings. Long-term consequences begin only after months or years have passed. Abductees may change their outlook and lifestyle, often acquiring new interests, developing new skills, giving up bad habits, becoming more humane and spiritual in interactions with others. Some abductees report apparitions, **men in black**, and the development of psychic powers, while more than half of all abductees claim repeated alien encounters.

Recurrent abductions may last a lifetime, beginning in infancy and continuing into old age. The activities of these serial abductions seem geared to the life cycle, with the beings carrying on a friendly, even playful relationship with young children. Examinations are mild at this time, and encounters often include admonitions to study and learn. With the onset of puberty a harsher regimen sets in as examination becomes the focus, and a businesslike preoccupation with the genitals



continues through young adulthood, until the abductee passes the prime reproductive years. For older abductees the sense of a mission or a need to help others grows strong.

Consistency in abduction reports persists into descriptions of the craft and its occupants. When abductees observe the craft before they enter it, the typical report describes a familiar flying saucer—a circular disc thin or thick, sometimes domed or Saturn-shaped. Alternative shapes include cigar, cylinder, sphere, cube, and a delta or boomerang, but these variants are few. Abductees taken from their bedrooms may see nothing more than light pouring through the window.

The interior includes an examination room and sometimes a conference room or lecture hall, an incubatorium or nursery, and a control room or engine room. Furnishings are sparse, and no one reports living quarters for the crew. By far the largest number of abductees see an examination room, usually circular with a domed ceiling and smooth surfaces without sharp corners, though on rare occasions this room has a wedge or “pie slice” shape. Lighting comes from indirect sources, as though the walls or ceiling are fluorescent, though a bright light from a specific source may shine in the abductee’s face and prevent close inspection of the room. It is often chilly, with a damp, misty, or heavy atmosphere. These rooms may contain equipment stored against the walls or a scanner attached to an armlike extension, but the only noteworthy item of furniture is an examination table or bed. These tables are nearly universal and usually appear one to a room, but in rare instances abductees have reported as many as 250 in a single chamber.

The most common occupants are humanoid beings of short stature, from two and a half to five feet tall, with a bulging hairless cranium, narrow jaw, and gray skin. Enormous elongated eyes described as catlike or “wrap-around” dominate the face, while the other features are unremarkable—a narrow, lipless slit for a mouth, and only holes or vestigial structures for nose and ears. These beings have a frail build and dress in a one-piece jumpsuit or uniform, often so tight-fitting the beings appear nude. They communicate with the abductee by telepathy and show no signs of gender differences.

These “standard” gray humanoids appear in most abduction crews, but other types also man the ship. Taller humanoids similar to the standard grays seem to serve as leaders or examiners while the shorter beings perform menial duties. Variants on the humanoid type include “reptiles” or “praying mantis” forms in a few cases. In other reports more human-looking occupants appear, sometimes entirely human, sometimes hybrids, though a more distinctive type is the “Nordic,” a tall, blond, blue-eyed entity of beautiful appearance and friendly demeanor, common in British reports but rare in the American sample. Monsters, robots, and bizarre creatures prove quite scarce in abduction reports.

The humanoids usually behave in a manner that leaves abductees feeling like guinea pigs. Emotions are scarce among these beings, and any politeness or consideration they express is usually manipulative in purpose, part of the effort to



coax the captive along and complete the examination with speed and efficiency. Only Nordics and the leader humanoids ever strike abductees as genuinely warm or considerate.

Strange sensations envelop abductees and lead to uncharacteristic behaviors suggestive of elaborate mental controls. As the UFO and beings approach at the onset of capture, abductees become passive and lose the will as well as the ability to resist. They compare the feeling to stupor, euphoria, or that of being “on Valium,” but by any name this condition means the beings take complete control. A premonition or restlessness may precede the first visible signs of impending capture, while some people find themselves lured or guided into a remote area against their will. If the beings want to take only one individual from a household or vehicle, they may “switch off” the other people, leaving them immobilized and unconscious during the abduction of the target subject. Paralysis and lethargy are common sensations throughout the abduction experience. The beings exert this control with penetrating, hypnotic eyes, sometimes with repeated instructions, at other times with a mere touch. A touch to the head can also relieve pain during examination procedures. During the latter stages of the abduction, the beings may instruct their captive to forget, but with or without such instructions, a memory lapse (“missing time”) steals away recollections of the encounter as it comes to an end.

Several surreal physical effects also cluster around the experience. Abductees seldom walk aboard the ship. More often they float over the ground in the company of escorts, or rise toward the craft in a beam of light. Leaving the house sometimes includes passing through closed doors or solid walls. Illusory scenes may appear to abductees while on board, and the encounter seems to take place inside a vacuum, with all natural and manmade sounds ceasing and even traffic disappearing or passers-by taking no notice (see **Oz Factor**).

**What are abductions?** One effort to explain abduction accepts it as a literal experience; another attempts to reduce it to conventional terms. Between these two extremes lies an imaginative profusion of speculations over the nature and purpose of this phenomenon. The literalists list their reasons to take these claims seriously:

(1) Abductees are credible people. They are ordinary, to all appearances normal and highly functional individuals who tell their stories with sincere conviction.

(2) Most abductees have no motive to deceive. Few seek publicity, and most prefer to avoid it; in fact they risk their jobs, reputations, and social relationships to report such experiences.

(3) Children describe key elements of the abduction experience even when too young to have fallen under media influence.

(4) Psychopathology has no answer for the phenomenon. No known mental aberration accounts for these reports, and abductees score within normal ranges on the usual psychological scales. The only distinctive characteristics of abductees are

those related to post-traumatic stress disorder, a condition found among victims of abuse and emotional shock but known to originate only from actual experience.

(5) Multiple witnesses report some abductions, and their descriptions corroborate or complement one another.

(6) Physical evidence in the form of ground traces, body marks, and disappearing pregnancies confirms the reports.

(7) The reports maintain a consistency of sequence and content over time and distance. For all the Hollywood imagery, the variety of science-fiction plots, and the sheer potential for creative fantasy inherent in a theme as bizarre as alien abduction, the fact remains that abductees tell curiously impersonal and unimaginative stories. The abductee is not the hero of his own tale, rather he is a victim, the passive pawn in a drama so devoid of idiosyncratic features the reports interchange with little difference but the captive's name. A story that begs for elaboration and alteration receives little. This stability sets abduction reports apart from urban legends or personal fantasies and suggests that diverse individuals share a similar experience.

The literalists' favorite explanation for abductions is the **extraterrestrial hypothesis (ETH)**—aliens arrive in spaceships to examine humans and deploy “magical” technology to accomplish this purpose. In the early days the “tagged bear” analogy seemed appropriate. Curious visitors surveying life on earth could hardly ignore human life and might drug, examine, and tag specimens in much the same way that humans study wildlife. As the number of cases burgeoned, the credibility of abduction as a purely scientific enterprise diminished in proportion. How many examinations did these aliens need to understand human biology? Budd Hopkins and David M. Jacobs fostered a darker vision when they noted that hints like preoccupation with the reproductive system, the gathering of genetic materials, rejection of the elderly, and images of sterility or a dying planet converge to indicate a singleness of purpose. These aliens seem bent on gathering genetic material from captives numbering perhaps in the millions, and using the DNA to create hybrid beings apparently on an industrial scale. The ultimate purpose of the project and fate of the hybrids remain unknown, but the relationship between aliens and humans is one-sided; the aliens exploit us as a resource for their own ends, indifferent to our well-being and dignity.

An opposing interpretation among literalists stresses educational and spiritual dimensions of the experience and finds personal as well as collective transformation to be the ultimate goal of abduction. Psychologist R. Leo Sprinkle recognizes an educational cycle through a lifetime of UFO encounters, beginning with preparation in childhood, advancing to initiation through intensive contacts in young adulthood, and culminating in service for the good of humanity during maturity. If the process is sometimes unpleasant, the goal is benevolent as the aliens guide us toward an enlargement of compassion and concern, a metamorphosis of planetary persons into cosmic citizens. Whitley Strieber acknowledges the terror and pain of

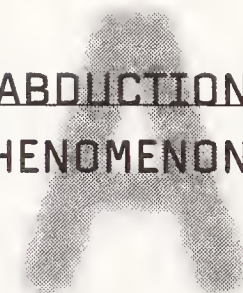


the experience, but he also senses communion with a larger reality. For him the visitors are “allies of our growth,” concerned to rebuild rather than destroy us. John Mack sees changes of consciousness and personal transformation as fundamental consequences of abduction. The beings “offer the possibility of openings to an inclusive, more expansive worldview that is powerfully internalized by many abductees.”

Some ufologists follow the mental and spiritual dimensions of the phenomenon far enough to leave the nuts-and-bolts UFO behind. These researchers remain literalists in the sense that they accept physical effects as part of abduction, but they replace the conventional ETH with concepts borrowed from Jungian psychology and theories of parapsychical realities. According to Michael Grosso, “The ‘visitors’ take on many guises and disguises. . . . Forms familiar from folklore and mythology, they strike me as too volatile, symbolic, and archetypal in character to be taken as aliens from the stars.” Dennis Stillings writes, “The putative ETs have all the earmarks of human psychic components in symbolic form, which are in the process of manifesting in the psychic economy of a person undergoing a psychological transformation of a typical sort—perhaps that very transformation traditionally referred to as ‘rebirth’.”

The parapsychical theorists envision a world of unfamiliar dimensions, encompassing many more strange phenomena than UFOs alone. Jacques Vallee in *Passport to Magonia* (1969) argues that the fairies of folklore shared much in common with UFO entities, including a habit of kidnapping humans for reproductive purposes. He proposes some vast, obscure intelligence that reconditions humans by presenting us with otherworldly phenomena to shake up the intellectual status quo and force us to think in different ways. UFO beings belong to this sequence of appearances, each manifestation assuming an appropriate cultural guise and adapting to current fashions of belief, but all related under the skin and all subversive of our everyday understanding. Psychologist Kenneth Ring suggests that persons with experience-prone personalities tap into an alternative universe or imaginal realm, a place as real as the everyday world but hidden to the conscious mind. Often visited by shamans and psychics, this realm opens to less gifted individuals when they enter altered states of consciousness, such as the quasi-hypnotic state associated with abduction or the mortal distress surrounding near-death experiences. For the duration of this opening, the symbolic, disorienting content of this otherworld floods into the experiencer’s awareness and reconfigures his or her consciousness. Still other theorists reorient this otherworld from external to internal sources and identify it with the unconscious mind.

Wherever they map its source, the paranormalists agree that the changes implied in UFO encounters arrive in the nick of time. Humanity has become a self-endangered species and faces a crisis of transformation. Says Mack, “We are a species out of harmony with nature, gone berserk in the indulgence of its desires at the expense of other living beings and the earth that has given us life.”





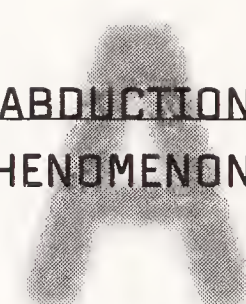
Abductions bring a message urgent with apocalyptic themes. Our wasteful, polluting ways imperil life on earth, ourselves included, but we ignore the threat. Enter into our consciousness the imagery of pallid, sickly aliens from a barren, devastated planet to forewarn us of our own future. Yet abductions are more than warnings; they are also agents of change. Examination symbolizes the sickness of mankind and the need to heal, as well as the painful, perilous process of ego death necessary for rebirth. Hybridization, whether literal or symbolic, personifies the unification of alien and human, the fusion of separate states into one. Abductions are strong medicine for the collective psyche, an active force that compels all mankind to expand its awareness and embrace all living things in a fellowship of cosmic wholeness.

**The skeptical perspective.** Criticisms of the case for abduction and its various interpretations have stemmed from ufologists and skeptics alike. The paranormal hypotheses remain popular for their explanatory power but never gain much leverage to move researchers toward a consensus. These theories remain speculative, dubious, untested and untestable, grand gestures that never engage the details of evidence or show much reason to prefer one interpretation over another.

A more substantive debate surrounds the seven points of evidence cited as the best case for a genuine abduction mystery. The physical proof an abduction claim demands has never come to hand. No photograph or videotape has caught the aliens in action; alleged implants recovered from the bodies of abductees have turned out to be conventional or ambiguous. Everyone acquires body scars over a lifetime, and even scooplike marks are too vague to be convincing. Soil traces and ground markings are equally indefinite. The claim of stolen fetuses would seem to offer the best hope for verification, but the claims remain numerous while the documentation remains nonexistent. One abduction report with a missing-fetus claim unraveled under investigation by a veteran ufologist, and two medical doctors sympathetic to abductions explored the claims but found no support for them. In a few cases a witness saw a claimant at home asleep during the time of a supposed abduction.

Lacking physical proof, the case for abduction depends on the anecdotal evidence of abductees. Though numerous and diverse, these people deviate from the psychological norm in several suggestive ways: One group demonstrated artistic and creative abilities along with weaknesses in self-identity; another group reported abuse or neglect as children, dissociative skills, and a proneness to paranormal experiences other than UFOs. Abductees may in fact have psychological distinctions that predispose them to vivid fantasy or odd subjective experiences, despite their appearance of normality. The testimony of children in support of abduction carries little weight, given the possibility that their parents have planted ideas or that the investigator has led them to confirm his or her expectations.

Even the consistency of abduction stories is far from perfect. Abductees do not produce carbon-copy stories to begin with, and over the years some systematic changes have appeared. Descriptions of the beings have standardized into the



familiar gray humanoid, the messages have exchanged the nuclear threat for more up-to-date fears about ecological catastrophe, and elements like the hybrid children entered the reports only after Hopkins introduced the idea in 1987. National differences appear in the sample, with British reports rich in Nordic beings and South American abductions more likely than their North American counterparts to report monsters.

If the positive case for abduction proves weaker than it first appears, skeptics build a case of their own to reduce the apparent mysteries of the phenomenon to conventional terms:

(1) Anecdotal evidence is unreliable. Even honest people are subject to error and self-deception no matter how convinced they feel.

(2) Not all abductees are honest. Some seek publicity, recognition, or profit through **hoaxes** or fantasies.

(3) Many abductees possess a fantasy-prone personality, having exceptional ability to create imaginative narratives and mistake their fictions for truths.

(4) Most abduction accounts emerge under hypnosis. Students demonstrate that memories recovered by hypnosis mingle truth and fantasy, while hypnotized subjects are highly suggestible and confabulate a story borrowing cues from the investigator.

(5) Media and cultural influences provide all the necessary raw materials for an abduction story.

(6) Abduction claims are implausible, unfeasible, and against everything we know. For instance, aliens that breathe our air with impunity contradict the principles of adaptive evolution, while flotation and passage through solid walls belong in ghost stories rather than in credible accounts of alien visitation.

Debunker Philip J. Klass disputes some famous abduction reports on a case-by-case basis. He explains the Walton claim as a hoax inspired by a television movie of the Hill abduction, aired a suspicious two weeks before the logger disappeared, and by the need of a logging crew to excuse its failure to meet schedule on a work contract. Contradictions in the Pascagoula case lead him to brand it a hoax as well. The Hill case proves to be a tissue of truth and fantasy, with Jupiter responsible for the initial UFO sighting and Betty's nightmares the source of the encounter story she and Barney told under hypnosis. Other people claim abductions out of the age-old motives of money or fame.

Few doubters insist all abductees are liars but see them rather as fluent fantasizers, members of that fraction of the population with exceptional abilities to internalize a theme like abduction and spin from it a personal fantasy vivid enough to delude both self and others. Readily hypnotizable and capable of dissociation, deep concentration, and role-playing, these people possess a fantasy-prone personality. An inspection of biographical data for 152 abductees found 87% did



indeed show at least one strong marker of fantasy-proneness. Believing their own creations, people who fantasize abductions then step forward to report them and become the self-selected purveyors of this fiction.

Dissociation goes hand in hand with such key features of the abduction experience as periods of amnesia, anxiety, false pregnancy, sleep paralysis, and sensations of a strange presence. An abusive childhood promotes dissociative skills, and abuse might also lead to screen memories, in this case with the trauma of childhood sexual abuse deflected from family members onto impersonal aliens as a way of coping with a very real form of betrayal. Other strange but conventional experiences that might feed abduction fantasies are sleep paralysis and hallucinations associated with entering sleep and awakening.

Critics have targeted the hypnotic techniques of abduction investigators for some of the harshest condemnation. Hypnosis helps reconstruct rather than recover memories, according to experts, but in the process it distorts recollections and debases them with falsehoods until little semblance remains of what really happened. With abduction investigators largely untrained in hypnosis and committed to a specific agenda, they lead their subjects to combine suggestions, fantasies, and prior knowledge into pseudomemories of an abduction. Hypnosis seals the fantasy with a sense of conviction and creates trauma where none really existed. An experiment with hypnotized non-abductees confirmed that subjects could tell a story that matched "genuine" abduction reports to a surprising degree. Interrogations including hypnosis recover past life and future life memories, dubious recollections of childhood sexual abuse and satanic ritual abuse. Accusations stemming from recovered memories have led to several sensational trials and recognition of a false memory syndrome created by the confabulation of pliant subjects with overzealous investigators. With similar methods in use, why accept abduction and reject the rest?

Skeptics are equally anxious to point out that abduction stories are familiar cultural baggage and contain nothing new. The whole story from its broad outline to its obscure details traces to widespread cultural beliefs and literature. Well-known 1950s movies such as *Invaders from Mars*, *Earth Versus the Flying Saucers*, *This Island Earth*, and *Killers from Space* introduce familiar abduction motifs like the dying planet, physical examination, domed interior, thought control, and implanted devices. In fact, all major abduction themes and images appear time and again in the science-fiction magazines of the 1920s and 1930s. The antecedents extend backwards into folklore, mythology, and religion, where diminutive supernatural beings are commonplace as fairies or demons, visits to enclosed otherworldly places for ordeals similar to examinations are frequent, and the supernatural lapse of time in fairyland or the transvective flight of witches through the air parallels missing time or flotation in abduction stories. Proponents of such **psychosocial hypotheses** argue that these cultural influences stock the abductee's memory and surface in dreams or under prodding by investigators to create the abduction story.



**The triumph of uncertainty.** If the case in favor of abduction teeters and creaks under close examination, similar inspection proves the skeptical structure to be just as ramshackle. Hoax explains some reports, but others weather competent investigations. Comparison of reliable versus unreliable reports—those investigated and seemingly legitimate as opposed to those never investigated or clearly false—betrays a notable contrast. The “bad” reports scatter further in their variety of descriptions and sequence of events than the “good” reports, meaning that the least reliable reports show signs of imaginative license where “good” reports reveal a coherency less compatible with creative origins.

A good example of resistance to criticism is the Hill case. If Barney borrows the idea of onboard experiences from Betty’s dream, the problem remains that he fails to copy her story. In fact, he complements her description by recounting his separate and independent experiences. Martin Kottmeyer recognizes an antecedent of the wrap-around eyes of the aliens in an entity appearing in “The Bellerose Shield” episode of *The Outer Limits*. What makes this identification so persuasive is the fact that the episode aired just two weeks before Barney underwent hypnosis and described the aliens as having elongated eyes. This close proximity between a cultural influence and the introduction of an abduction motif seems striking at first glance, but is less persuasive in the context of Barney’s earlier, conscious recall when he remembered a being with compelling eyes looking down at him from a UFO. If he saw the *Outer Limits* episode (which his widow Betty says he did not), he might have borrowed the wrap-around eyes as a metaphor, but his preoccupation with the staring entity and its eyes began years before this television image could have influenced him.

In most other efforts to establish media or cultural influences, standards of evidence are most conspicuous by their absence. After fishing expeditions amid folklore, science-fiction literature, and movie imagery, psychosocial theorists satisfy themselves to draw isolated motifs out of context, select favorable examples but ignore the rest, and never worry whether the obscurity of sources limits the likelihood that an abductee might have seen them. Movies are a plausible source because they enjoy mass exposure, but why abductees choose the same narrow selection of movie elements when Hollywood has offered so much variety remains an unanswered question. Skeptics have also trumpeted Steven Spielberg’s 1977 film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* as the source of the standard gray humanoid; yet Walton, Andreasson, and many other abductees reported this form prior to 1977.

Uncertainties cloud the arguments for fantasy-proneness and hypnotic confabulation as well. Standardized tests fail to identify abductees as a group having above-average fantasizing abilities, or any psychopathological characteristics. Some abductees are psychologically different, many are not, but they all tell similar stories. For all the good reasons to beware of hypnosis, its influence on the abduction story seems intangible. The content of stories recovered through hypnosis differs little from stories recovered by spontaneous recall; predictions that the personality or opinions of the investigator should influence story content have not

borne out. Those experiments with hypnotized non-abductees drew a different description of the beings from each subject, whereas "real" abductees describe gray humanoids most of the time.

Any final weighing of the evidence must settle with uncertainty. Claims of abduction remain fantastic and unverified by any convincing physical evidence, even though such evidence should be forthcoming. Issues of sample bias, false memory, and the psychological profile of abductees still demand adequate investigation as possible sources of conventional solutions. On the other hand, abduction stories remain more consistent than we would expect, given how readily narrators improvise on folk narratives such as urban legends, varying them with exuberance even when media sources stress only a single version. A comparable burst of creativity never strikes abduction reports. The multiple-witness cases curl up another question mark at the end of deliberation about this phenomenon, leaving this most bizarre of UFO phenomena where it began—still a mystery in need of a solution.  
—Thomas E. Bullard

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## ADAMSKI, GEORGE (1891-1965)

**Contactee** George Adamski was born in Poland on April 17, 1891. When he was one or two, his parents emigrated to Dunkirk, New York. The young Adamski received little formal schooling and educated himself, influenced by his parents' strong religious beliefs.

By the 1930s Adamski had become a minor figure on the California occult scene, founding the Royal Order of Tibet and lecturing on "Universal Law." His pupils began to call him "professor." When he took up residence in Palomar Gardens, on the southern slope of Mount Palomar, and set up a small observatory, "Professor" Adamski was sometimes mistaken for a professional astronomer associated with the celebrated observatory a few miles away.

In 1949 Adamski published a science-fiction novel, *Pioneers of Space: A Trip to the Moon, Mars and Venus*, under his own by-line (the book was actually written by his secretary Lucy McGinnis; all of Adamski's books would be ghostwritten). It would come back to haunt him in later years, when critics pointed out that portions of it bore a striking resemblance to subsequent claims he would make of interplanetary contacts and travels.

According to Adamski's account, as he and associates were watching a meteor shower on the evening of October 9, 1946, they spotted a "gigantic space craft" hovering overhead. Some weeks later he and customers at the restaurant at which he worked discussed the sighting, and a military officer who overheard the conversation assured Adamski that the object was indeed from another world. The following summer, when reports of "flying saucers" attracted wide attention and comment, Adamski saw 184 UFOs pass overhead in squadrons of 32 each. On another occasion Adamski produced two pictures of alleged spaceships said to have been taken through his six-inch telescope.

Adamski gave his first lectures on flying saucers in 1949. In them he made fantastic claims, such as that government and science had established the exis-





Flying saucer contactee George Adamski at Mount Palomar, California. (Fortean Picture Library)

tence of UFOs two years earlier, via radar trackings of 700-foot-long spacecraft "on the other side of the moon." These craft were due to land on earth imminently, and they could be coming from anywhere, inasmuch as science now knows "all planets are inhabited."

In 1950 he got his first national exposure as coauthor of an article about his photographs in *Fate*, a popular digest-sized magazine devoted to anomalies and the paranormal. A follow-up article showed even more dramatic photographs capturing spaceships passing over the face of the moon.

**Enter the space people.** All of this would have done no more than ensure Adamski a footnote in UFO history if it had not been for the alleged event that occurred on November 20, 1952, when he and six trusted associates drove out to the desert hoping to see a flying

saucer and maybe even meet its pilots. Adamski's companions included his associates Alice Wells and George Hunt Williamson.

Shortly after noon, at a location between Desert Center, California, and Parker, Arizona, the seven saw a huge, silvery cigar-shaped object approach them and hover before drifting off. "That ship had come looking for me," Adamski declared. He asked to be taken about a mile down the road. As he, Lucy McGinnis, and Alfred Bailey drove away, they saw the cigar shadowing them. Soon Adamski asked to be dropped off and directed his companions to rejoin the others. Meanwhile he set up his telescope and waited, confident that contact was imminent. Sure enough, five minutes later a "beautiful small craft" came down half a mile away.

Soon Adamski saw a figure waving to him. As he would write, "I fully realized I was in the presence of a man from space—A HUMAN BEING FROM ANOTHER WORLD!" He was a beautiful-looking being of human appearance, with long blond hair and an "extremely high forehead." Through gestures, a few words, and telepathy, Adamski learned that the being was from Venus, and he and other beings from other worlds were coming here in peace, out of a deep concern about humanity's atomic weapons and warlike ways. Adamski's extraterrestrial companion declined to

ADAMSKI,  
GEORGE  
(1891-1965)



be photographed but asked for one of Adamski's unexposed pictures. Soon he entered his ship and sailed away.

On the morning of December 13 the flying saucer returned. A porthole opened, a hand extended, and the film holder was tossed on the ground. When developed, the original picture (apparently showing the Venusian spaceship at close range) "was replaced," Adamski wrote, "by a strange photograph and a symbolic message, which to this day has not been fully deciphered."

The next year Adamski's 54-page account (ghostwritten by Clara L. John) was appended to an already completed manuscript by Desmond Leslie and published as *Flying Saucers Have Landed*. Two years later Adamski was back with even more sensational claims in *Inside the Space Ships*. This time he was cavorting with friendly, beautiful humanlike beings from other planets in our solar system. Among them was his friend from the November 20 meeting. Besides the Venusian "Orthon," others were "Firkon," a Martian, and "Ramu," a Saturnian.

*Space Ships* consists of long, verbatim conversations with space people, who teach an occult philosophy identical to the one with which Adamski had long associated himself, and a surprisingly tedious account of a voyage into outer space. As sociologist David Stuppel has remarked, "One of the striking characteristics of Adamski's work is its literary barrenness. Although he describes extraordinary events, the narratives have a lifeless quality about them. The reader . . . enters a perfect world—the kind, he says, we can create here on earth if we behave ourselves." These perfect worlds are all but one (earth) of the solar system's 12 planets, all but one inhabited by physically handsome, spiritually evolved beings.

By the mid-1950s Adamski was an international occult celebrity. Other contactees followed in his wake, though Adamski would remain the acknowledged leader of the movement.

In January 1959 Adamski embarked on a world tour. In May Adamski ignited fierce controversy in Holland where he was received by Queen Juliana, attacked in the press, and jeered by university students at his lectures. Adamski attributed such opposition to the "Silence Group," financed by international bankers who feared the moral reforms and technological advances friendly space people would bring to earth.

**Decline and fall.** In 1962 Adamski announced that the "Brothers" (as he called the space people) were going to take him to a conference on Saturn. This was to set in motion a series of events that would alienate him from some of his most important followers. Most disturbing to those who knew his teachings and who had often heard him warn them against the dangers of seeking psychic guidance was a statement that upon his return he would pass on, in confidence, his new knowledge only to "people of high standing"; moreover, he would be "allowed to review the past lives of those who are working with me and why they are associated with me at this time."

A more recent interpretation of Adamski's claims comes from British writer Hilary Evans, who says that while there are undeniable elements of conscious invention in the Adamski story, "we have no right to do what many ufologists did when such cases as these were first reported—to dismiss them as simple imaginative fantasy." At least his early experiences, in Evans's reading, may have arisen from visions that befell him because of a sincere spiritual commitment to an occult world view.

It is certainly true that the motivations of even the most egregious liars are not always easily discerned. The world is full of those who are at once cynics and believers. In some strange way we may never understand, Adamski may have been one. Yet, whatever may have motivated him, what matters in the end is that his tales of interplanetary adventure and discourse are false. For good or ill, however, Adamski virtually defined the contactee movement of his time, and his influences—and the controversies that surrounded him—continue even now.

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## AERIAL PHENOMENA RESEARCH ORGANIZATION

The Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (APRO) was formed in January 1952, by Leslie James (Jim) and Coral Lorenzen of Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin. In its constitution APRO declared its purpose: to "promote the eventual enlightenment of the people of the world in regard to the truth of the saucer phenomena—that they are in fact interplanetary vehicles." June 1952 saw the release of the first issue of *The A.P.R.O. Bulletin*, destined to be one of the most widely read UFO periodicals.

In 1954 the Lorenzens moved to Alamogordo, New Mexico, and took jobs at Holloman Air Force Base. Two years later Coral resigned to devote her full attention to the rapidly growing APRO. The Lorenzens and APRO went to Tucson in 1960, when Jim joined the staff of the Kitt Peak National Observatory. In 1967 Jim left the observatory to form Lorenzen Music Enterprises.

Along with such organizations as Civilian Saucer Intelligence of New York (CSI), Civilian Research, Interplanetary Flying Objects (CRIFO), and the **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP), APRO helped define serious ufology in the 1950s. As the organization grew beyond its flying-saucer-club roots, it attracted some of the small number of scientists willing to identify themselves publicly with UFO research, and it established links with foreign ufologists.

Unlike the other groups, APRO was less certain than NICAP was that a high-level UFO cover-up existed. The Lorenzens felt that NICAP's drive for congressional hearings was largely a waste of time and that ufology's emphasis should be on investigation and documentation of cases. Moreover, from the beginning APRO (like CSI and CRIFO) championed **close encounters of the third kind** (UFO-occupant



reports), which it felt were more credible than claims by professional **contactees** of extended communication with benevolent Space Brothers. But NICAP was skittish about these reports, which it feared could bring ridicule to ufology. The two organizations broke openly after an editorial in the *Bulletin* referred to NICAP (not altogether inaccurately) as a “lobbying” effort.

The revival of UFO sightings in the mid-1960s also revived flagging public interest in the subject, and APRO’s membership, which had been in decline, rose to over 1500 by 1967. In 1969, for the first time, APRO’s headquarters were not in the Lorenzen’s home, and the organization had a full-time employee. By herself or with Jim, Coral wrote several popular paperback books, and the organization busily recruited a network of academic consultants. With NICAP in decline and CSI and CRIFO long defunct, APRO seemed poised to become the dominant force in American ufology.



APRO founders  
Jim and Coral  
Lorenzen.  
(Fortean Picture  
Library)



Instead, it suffered a serious blow from an unexpected quarter: a portion of its own membership. In 1969 Walter H. Andrus, Jr., an APRO regional officer from Quincy, Illinois, left the organization with enough followers to start a rival group, the Midwest UFO Network (MUFON), later renamed—as it became a force on the national and international scene and relocated to Texas—the Mutual UFO Network. The Lorenzens's dismay only intensified as MUFON eclipsed APRO as the largest and most influential membership organization in ufology.

APRO never entirely recovered from the schism. By the late 1970s the *Bulletin* was appearing ever more irregularly. Sightings again were in decline, along with public attention. MUFON, along with the Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS), formed in 1973 by former **Project Blue Book** scientific consultant **J. Allen Hynek**, claimed most of the loyalties of what remained of ufology during one of the bleakest periods in its history.

Meanwhile the Lorenzens's health had begun to deteriorate. Jim Lorenzen died of cancer on August 28, 1986. On April 12, 1988, Coral died of respiratory failure. With the Lorenzens gone, the APRO board elected to dissolve the organization.

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# AIRSHIP SIGHTINGS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

## AIRSHIP SIGHTINGS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

On July 12, 1891, residents of Ottawa, Ontario, observed something they had never seen before. According to a press account:

Some of the residents of Theodore street were considerably startled last Sunday evening about 7 o'clock by seeing a dark object apparently suspended in the air over the Rifle range. From one of the houses on the street a pair of binocular glasses . . . was borrowed, and . . . the object appeared somewhat in the shape of a huge cigar, at one end of which there appeared to be a revolving fan, while the other end was enlarged, from which a bright light was plainly visible. Lesser lights were visible at intervals in the center. On being asked whether it might not have been an air balloon [sic], those who saw it said the structure was far too large and of a peculiar shape. It was travelling from south to north, and soon passed out of sight.

In March 1892 accounts in the *New York Times*, the *Manchester Guardian*, and newspapers on the European continent detailed a furious controversy raging on the border of Russian Poland and Germany, scene of numerous sightings of mysterious "balloons." The objects, usually seen coming from the west, were thought to be carrying German spies. Observers said the vehicles appeared fully maneuverable—in other words, not subject to the vagaries of the wind, as with conventional balloons—and were even able to hover for as long as 40 minutes at a time. They also carried brilliant searchlights.

These curious and apparently isolated stories would serve as a small preview of a much greater epic to come, one that would occupy newspapers all over the United States for six months between November 1896 and April 1897.

The latter nineteenth century saw great popular interest in the possibilities of human flight. In 1862 aviation enthusiasts in France formed a society to promote research and experiments in this area, and in the United States inventors published designs for rigid dirigibles and powered aircraft, but what flights there were consisted of little more than short hops. No history of aviation reports flights of large, piloted dirigibles and other aircraft over the western United States at any time in the nineteenth century, the dreams and schemes of would-be inventors notwithstanding.

**The California saga.** The great American airship scare begins in California in the fall of 1896. Early on the evening of November 17, according to the next day's *Sacramento Evening Bee*, a light resembling an "electric arc lamp propelled by some



mysterious force" passed over the city and was seen by hundreds of persons as it traveled at low altitude and, as if intelligently controlled, took evasive action as it approached buildings and hills. Some observers claimed to have gotten a good look at the object and to have heard voices. Residents of Oak Park, a suburb, told reporters that the day before, an aerial object had circled the town at a high altitude and left a trail of smoke.

The airship made a return appearance over Sacramento on the twentieth. The next afternoon passengers on an Oakland streetcar saw a "peculiar-looking contrivance" high overhead. It had a headlight in front and a searchlight on the bottom. One witness said it "somewhat resembled a balloon traveling end on . . . and with what appeared to be wings both before and behind the [bottom] light" (*San Francisco Call*, November 22). The *Call* reported that at least one sighting had occurred in early October, when a young woman riding a wheel along San Francisco's Telegraph Avenue observed a "strange-looking object" with a powerful headlight passing overhead.

Meanwhile the *Call's* rival, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, was headlining the claims of local attorney George D. Collins, who stated that he represented the airship inventor, a wealthy man who had come to California from Maine seven years earlier. Collins was quoted as saying (though he would soon deny it) that he had seen the machine, a 150-foot metal contraption with "two canvas wings 18 feet wide and a rudder shaped like a bird's tail." Built in Oroville 60 miles away, it had flown over Sacramento and was now hidden in the San Francisco area while the inventor dealt with some technical problems. But soon he would fly the airship over the city "a dozen times" and everyone would get a good look at it. In response another San Francisco paper, the *Examiner*, sent a reporter to Oroville. He learned that the people of that city scoffed at Collins's story.

On the twenty-fourth Collins approached the *Call* to complain that the skeptical *Examiner* had printed falsehoods and recklessly misquoted him. That day the *Examiner* had published an interview with attorney Frederick Bradley, a friend of Collins. Bradley said Collins had told him about seeing the airship housed in a barn; then its inventor boarded it and shot up into the air. Soon afterwards it landed easily a few feet from Collins. Collins swore this story was a lie, that in fact he had never seen the ship but only heard about it from the inventor. The *Chronicle* (November 24) ridiculed the attorney's sudden backtracking and cited an earlier statement in which, after being asked on his "word of honor" if he had seen the airship, he had sworn he had.

Suspicion soon fell on itinerant dentist E. H. Benjamin, identified as a Carmel, Maine, native, traveling salesman, and inventor. When reporters finally caught up with Benjamin, he admitted that Collins was his attorney but insisted that his "inventions have to do with dentistry" (*Call*, November 24). Badgered by questions about the airship, Benjamin went into hiding, leaving behind most of his

possessions. Reporters and laborers who sorted through them found nothing more exciting than copper dental fittings.

On the twenty-fourth the *Oakland Tribune* announced that a prominent citizen, George Carleton, knew the name of the inventor but was pledged to secrecy. He learned it from a fellow Mason, "who talked with the man who saw the machine" as it was tested in the Oroville area.

The following day the *Call* weighed in with even more sensational claims. W.H.H. Hart, the flamboyant former attorney general of California, declared he now represented the inventor, who had fired Collins for talking too much. Yet Collins was the soul of discretion next to Hart, who seemed determined to tell all he knew (or said he knew) short of the name of the inventor, rumored now to be a Dr. Catlin, an alleged associate of Dr. Benjamin. Hart said two airships existed and his role was to "consolidate both interests." One was built in an eastern state, and he was intimately familiar with this one, which he had seen with his own eyes. He added, "I . . . propose to use [the California airship] wholly for war purposes, and within the next five or six months it will be put to the test." It would drop dynamite on Havana. (In 1898 the United States and Spain would go to war, and Spain would be forced to relinquish its Cuban colony.)

The same article quotes a secret informant's account of how the inventor recently had spent the late hours sailing from the Oroville area to Sacramento. The informant said that "about 3 o'clock in the morning [the inventor] landed in the barnyard of a farm situated in one of the bay counties. He put his airship into the barn and locked the door, for he had previously made arrangements to that end. . . . This was the very first trip of the new airship. Since then he has been out nearly every night. . . ."

In due course Hart, like Collins, moderated his claims, insisting that he had not seen the airship, only met the man "who claims to be the inventor" and seen drawings and diagrams of the craft. The alleged inventor, Hart said, "was a cousin of Mr. Linn, who was [Cuban revolutionary] Antonio Maceo's electrician." Nothing came of any of this, and soon Hart vanished from press accounts. Nearly a century later, it is impossible to judge what, if any, truth lay behind the claims he and Collins made. Perhaps the clients were trying to develop an airship and took advantage of publicity about unidentified airships (and of the credulity of their lawyers) to claim them as their own; if ever they existed, their own never flew.

Meanwhile, reports of sightings continued up and down the state of California. Most were of nocturnal lights, and at least some of these were planets and stars. Others were lighted kites sent aloft by pranksters. But the remainder seemed to have no apparent explanation, if one is to credit press and witness testimony. For example, on the evening of November 25, a mysterious light circled Sacramento at a rapid rate of speed. Observers included such officials as Deputy Secretary of State George A. McCalvy, District Attorney Frank D. Ryan, and E. D. McCabe, the governor's personal secretary. It shared the sky with Venus but was,



according to the *Call* (November 26), "fully three times as large." Its behavior was certainly not that of an astronomical body: "When [it] first appeared it was seen moving rapidly from the northeast and heading in a southwesterly direction. As it neared the southern boundary of the city it turned directly toward the west and after passing the city went south, being distinctly visible for upward of 20 minutes. It moved with far more rapidity than it had been seen to do in its two former visits" even though there was not a "breath of wind moving at the time." It made a second appearance later in the evening, approaching from the west and disappearing in the northeast. One witness said he had seen the "outlines of a dark body" just above the light.

On November 26, between 8 and 8:30 p.m., electrician Case Gilson and three other men allegedly saw an unlighted airship in the clear sky 1000 feet over Oakland. It was coming from the southeast and flying northward against the wind. Gilson told the *Oakland Tribune* (December 1) that it

looked like a great black cigar with a fishlike tail. . . . The body was at least 100 feet long and attached to it was a triangular tail, one apex being attached to the main body. The surface of the airship looked as if it were made of aluminum, which exposure to wind and weather had turned dark. . . . The airship went at tremendous speed. As it neared Lorin it turned quickly and disappeared in the direction of San Francisco. At half past 8 we saw it again, when it took about the same direction and disappeared.

The *Stockton Evening Mail* of November 27 recounted what may be the first published claim of a UFO **abduction**. It reported that Shaw ("formerly of the *Mail* editorial staff") "is at present engaged in collecting an exhibit for the Stockton Commercial Association to be displayed at the Citrus Fair which will be held in Fresno during the coming month." Perhaps it was publicity he was seeking, or maybe he just liked a good joke. Whatever the explanation, his story is interesting



This sketch of an airship over Oakland, California, appeared in the *San Francisco Call* in November 1896. (Fortean Picture Library)

for what it reveals about another strain of speculation: for all the talk about earthly inventors, there was also some talk about extraterrestrial visitors. Shaw's tale is the first explicitly to link alien beings with unidentified airships.

Shaw said he and a companion had left Lodi around six o'clock on the twenty-fifth and "were jogging along quietly when the horse stopped suddenly and gave a snort of terror. Looking up we beheld three strange beings . . . nearly or quite seven feet high and very slender." The beings, who looked more or less human, appeared friendly and curiously beautiful. Shaw asked where they were from. "They seemed not to understand me," he reported, "but began—well, 'warbling' expresses it better than talking." Shaw observed them closely, noting small, delicate, nail-less hands and long, narrow feet. When he touched one under the elbow, he found the being weighed less than an ounce. Shaw went on:

They were without any sort of clothing, but were covered with a natural growth . . . as soft as silk to the touch, and their skin was like velvet. Their faces and heads were without hair, the ears were very small, and the nose had the appearance of polished ivory, while the eyes were large and lustrous. The mouth, however, was small, and it seemed to me that they were without teeth. That and other things led me to believe that they neither ate nor drank, and that life was sustained by some sort of gas. Each of them had swung under the left arm a bag to which was attached a nozzle, and every little while one or the other would place the nozzle in his mouth, at which time I heard a sound as of escaping gas.

The beings each carried an egg-sized light that, when opened, revealed an "intense but not unpleasant light." They then attempted, according to Shaw, "to lift me, probably with the intention of carrying me away," but they lacked the strength to budge him or his companion. Abandoning this effort, they turned and flashed their lights toward a nearby bridge. The two men saw a 150-foot airship hovering nearby. Shaw related, "The three walked rapidly toward the ship . . . with a swaying motion, their feet only touching the ground at intervals of about 15 feet . . . . With a little spring they rose to the machine, opened a door in the side, and disappeared within." The ship then flew quickly out of sight.

Shaw concluded his account with a theory that "those we beheld were inhabitants of Mars, who have been sent to earth for the purpose of securing one of its inhabitants." With tongue presumably planted even deeper in cheek, he inveighed against "the stories being told by certain San Francisco attorneys." These are "clumsy fakes" that "should not be given credence by anyone."

By the second week of December, California had begun to recover from airship fever, though sporadic sightings continued into January.

**The 1897 story begins.** On February 2, 1897, a dispatch from Hastings, Nebraska, published in the *Omaha Daily Bee*, remarked on airship sightings in the south-cen-



tral part of the state. The first sighting had occurred, it said, the previous fall, when an airship “was seen floating in the air about 500 feet above ground, and after standing nearly still for about 30 minutes it began to circle about and then took a northerly direction for about two miles, after which it returned to its starting place and sunk [sic] into oblivion.” On February 1 the craft returned, appearing as a “large, glaring light” hovering, ascending, descending, and moving at a “most remarkable speed.” On February 4 a group of worshippers returning from a prayer meeting at Inavale, 40 miles south of Hastings, saw a bright light pass far overhead. Ten minutes later it was back, only this time it was much closer to the ground and the witnesses could see a cone-shaped construction 30 to 40 feet long, “with a bright headlight and six smaller lights, three on a side, and . . . two sets of wings on a side, with a large fan-shaped rudder” (*Bee*, February 6). Voices and laughter could be heard.

All that month airship stories would circulate through the state, setting the stage for the wave that would sweep the country in late March. If we can judge from newspaper accounts, many, perhaps most, sightings were of Venus, meteors, and kites. Mostly the “airship” was observed as a large light, but viewers were more than willing to fill in the missing details.

By the latter part of February strange lights were appearing in the skies of northern Kansas. By March 28 the *Kansas City Star* was complaining about “credulous correspondents in various parts of Kansas” who were mistaking Venus, then in the northwestern sky, for an airship. No doubt some were, but Venus could not have been responsible for the object that appeared over Belleville late at night on at least two occasions in late March, moving at 75 mph and

lighting up the houses and city like an immense meteor and seem[ing] to stop a little northeast of the city, remaining almost stationary for 20 or 30 minutes, then sail[ing] rapidly up and down going northwest, then south passing below then above some scattering clouds and moving in a playful manner, finally disappearing in the distance; appearing again at two o’clock going south and return[ing] north about five o’clock in the morning [*Topeka Daily Capital*, March 28].

With the onset of April, airship sightings spread throughout a variety of midwestern, southern, and eastern states. They were mostly over by the end of May. A full account would occupy a thick book. A sense of what the 1897 airship scare involved can be gained, however, from an examination of its constituent features, at least as they were reported in period newspapers (the quality of whose reporting, as we shall see, left much to be desired).

**Representative airship reports.** To many observers the airship was a brilliant nocturnal light, often compared to an arc light, that moved through the heavens at a notable speed. Frequently the object would appear first as a light, then at some point as a structured craft. For example, at Quincy, Illinois, late on the evening of April 10 hundreds of onlookers saw a “bright white light,” with red and green lights

on either side of it, flying low over the Mississippi River on the city's west side. It rose in the air, headed east over Quincy, then south, then west. It hovered over a park for a few minutes before moving north and stopping half a mile later to hover again. It reversed direction and left in a southerly direction at "tremendous speed." The *Quincy Morning Whig* (April 11) reported,

At times it did not appear to be more than 400 or 500 feet above the ground, and in the bright moonlight was plainly silhouetted against the clear sky. Men who saw the thing describe it as a long, slender body shaped like a cigar, and made of some bright metal, perhaps aluminum, on which the moonlight glistened. On either side of the hull extending outwards and upwards were what appeared to be wings, and above the hull could be seen the misty outlines of some sort of superstructure, a clear view of which, however, was intercepted by the wings. At the front end of the thing was a headlight, and from the brightness and intensity of the stream of light thrown out it was apparently similar to the searchlights used on steamboats. About midway of the hull were small lights, a green light on the starboard or right hand side, and a red light on the port or left hand side.

Estimates of its length varied from 50 feet to twice that.

Cochransville, Ohio, April 19: "It was cone shaped, 180 feet long, and flashed red, white and green lights from the bow" (*Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, April 20). Minneapolis, Minnesota, April 11: After observing an airship through glasses, R. G. Adams described it as "18 or 20 feet long. It was shaped like a cigar and in the middle and on top of it was a square light. This light was alternately red, green and red" (*St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 12). Decatur, Illinois, April 11: A witness said the airship "looks like two monster cigars with three bright headlights" (*Decatur Evening Republican*, April 12). Eastern Iowa, April 8: "[H]undreds of people . . . all describe it about the same way. A bright glaring headlight, revealing a glistening steel hull, dim winglike projections on either side and a hissing sound as it glides through the air" (*Chicago Record*, April 9). Denton, Texas, circa April 14: An airship passed over the face of the moon and a stargazer who watched it through powerful glasses reported "it floated about a half mile above the earth and seemed to be about 50 feet long, of a cigar shape with two great wings thrust out from each side; a broad tail or steering sail behind and a long beak or blade resembling a cutwater on a ship in front. At the point where the beak joined the main body a powerful search light threw its rays far into the night ahead, beside which even the luminosity of the moon paled. A row of windows along the side gave out similar lights" (*Dallas Morning News*, April 15).

**Unusual reports.** Lincoln, Illinois, April 12: At 8 p.m. more than 50 observers saw an unusual aerial vehicle pass overhead. One reported a large, bright headlight "in front of a V-shaped object" (*Lincoln Weekly Courier*, April 13). Fort Wayne, Indiana, mid-April: A fast-moving, yellow-colored object in the western sky looked "pear-



shaped with the apex downward," according to witness F. Crocker. R. T. Tretheway described it as "round with a V-shaped tail to it. The color of it seemed a bright yellow and strong rays of the same colored light were constantly being shot out from the main body" (*Fort Wayne Weekly Gazette*, April 15). Cincinnati, Ohio, May 4: Dr. Louis Dumhoff and other witnesses reported an object "moving in a zigzag course, first up, then down." It was "egg-shaped, red in color and appearing as though a portion of it was covered with a curtain, the rays escaping in the center and at each end" (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 5).

**Landings and close encounters.** Western Iowa, April 4: Around 12:15 a.m. dairy farmer Dick Butler, returning home from a business trip in Sioux City, saw a glow in the cornfield near his home. The source was, according to a newspaper report, "a dark bulk through the windows of which the light shone." It looked like a "long, narrow car, resembling a corset box in shape, but perhaps 30 or 35 feet in length and six or seven in width and height. Over this car floated a cigar-shaped bag, horizontally placed, of about the same length as the car, and eight or 10 feet thick at its greatest diameter." At that moment Butler's horses bolted and he was tossed into the ditch. By the time he was on his feet again, the object had ascended and was flying away (*Marshalltown [Iowa] Evening News-Republican*, April 9). Lake Elmo, Minnesota, April 13: Two men riding to Hudson, Wisconsin, from nearby Lakeland, Minnesota, at 11 p.m. spotted a figure in a clearing. "He walked around as if he was looking for something," Frederick Chamberlain said. The witnesses heard a crackling sound, as if twigs and brush were being crushed, followed by an irregular "rushing noise." "A second later," Chamberlain said, "and we distinguished a long, high object of a gray white color. The thing struck me as resembling most of the top of a 'prairie schooner' or immigrant wagon covered with canvas. At the same instant we saw two rows of lights—four lights in two pairs—on each pair including a red and green light. The thing rose quickly at a sharp angle, so as to just clear the tree tops. As it passed over the trees to the south we saw several more white lights. But we could make out no machinery or wings or wheels or rudders or human figures, or even the exact outline of the affair." In the mud the witnesses found "14 footprints . . . each two feet in length, six inches wide, arranged seven on each side, and in an oblong pattern." A farmer in the area independently reported seeing a dark object with green and red lights flying overhead at about the same time (*St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 15).

In the larger context of UFO history, reports such as these are not inherently any more incredible than modern UFO reports, which they resemble to a striking degree. What differences exist are relatively minor. In the twentieth century cigar-shaped UFOs (including ones with wings) are reported less often than discs ("flying saucers") but are nonetheless among the most commonly seen anomalous aerial phenomena. A ufologist might argue that a more significant contrast is that in our time UFOs observed nocturnally are likely to be described as luminous or glowing, whereas the 1896-97 reports have the objects carrying lights on the sides but otherwise being unilluminated; yet a close reading of twentieth-century UFO



reports uncovers a number of little-noted sightings of silver, nonluminous objects of dirigible shape, often carrying body lights and sweeping searchlights. These may well be the same sorts of objects turn-of-the-century witnesses were reporting.

There are, however, other kinds of nineteenth-century airship stories that figure prominently in press accounts of the period and that are difficult to square with the UFO phenomenon as it is ordinarily understood. These are reported below, in ascending order of improbability and with qualifying adverbs such as “allegedly” and “supposedly” withheld for reasons of readability. It should be stated that stories of aeronaut hearings, sightings and meetings that are at least *obvious* jokes are not listed here.

**Aeronauts heard.** Hawarden, Iowa, April 11: As a 60-foot-long, cone-shaped airship with four wings passed overhead at low altitude, witnesses heard “the working of machinery and the sound of human voices . . . among which was mingled the laughter of women” (*Des Moines Leader*, April 13). Jacksonville, Illinois, April 10: “Many reliable persons assert that they plainly distinguished human voices” as a long, narrow, metallic craft with a searchlight flew over the town (*Quincy [Illinois] Morning Whig*, April 11).

**Aeronauts seen.** Minnetonka, Minnesota, April 11: Late in the evening a cyclist observed a “flying machine . . . shaped like an ordinary boat,” with red and green lights on each side and a powerful light in front. Inside the craft were “living persons, men, women and children. They were moving about as if very busy” (*Minneapolis Tribune*, April 13). Danvers, Illinois, April 16: Just after midnight an “airship” and a smaller “trailer which followed it very closely” were observed by



This depiction of an airship sighting over Chicago appeared in the *Chicago Times Herald* on April 12, 1897. (Fortean Picture Library)



many residents. "The ships were of some bright material and the occupants were dressed in western style" (*Bloomington [Illinois] Pantagraph*, April 17). Lyons, Nebraska, April 19: At 9:30 p.m. an airship appeared a mile above the town. It had large fans or propellers that the witnesses could hear. One observer who watched it through opera glasses saw a "large man muffled in a great coat, apparently presiding over some kind of a steering apparatus" (*Logan Valley Sun [Lyons]*, April 21).

**Aeronauts encountered.** Near Peru, Nebraska, April 6: While looking for strayed cattle, James Southard became lost. At 2 a.m. he noticed a light on a bar in the Missouri River. It was from a landed airship, 200 feet long, whose crewmen were repairing the searchlight. The aeronauts answered all of Southard's questions. "The craft is loaded with several tons of dynamite and is bound for Cuba," where it would bomb Spanish troop camps and ships (*Auburn [Nebraska] Granger*, April 9). Near Elburn, Illinois, early April: Farmers came upon a landed airship, "made of some light substance like aluminum." Two aeronauts, who were repairing the vehicle, would not reveal much about themselves, except to say that they were crossing the country from the Pacific coast to the Atlantic and were "following the Northwestern railway" (*Rockford [Illinois] Daily Republic*, April 12). Near Cisco, Texas, April 15: Late in the evening, seeing a light where he knew no farmhouse stood, Patrick Byrnes investigated, spotting a 200-foot airship and startling its crew members who were repairing the searchlight. "The craft is loaded with several tons of dynamite and is bound for Cuba." (Note the identical phrasing in the Nebraska story above.) The airship resumed its flight at 1 a.m. (*Fort Worth Register*, April 18). Near Beaumont, Texas, mid-April: Hearing that an airship had landed at a farm two miles from town, Rabbi A. Levy went to check out the story. In the darkness he "could see very little except the outlines of the ship," 150 feet long with 100-foot wings. "I spoke to one of the men when he went into the farmer's house, and shook hands with him. . . . Yes, I did hear him say where it was built, but I can't remember the name of the place, or the name of the inventor. He said that they had been traveling a great deal, and were testing the machine. I was so dumbfounded that I could not frame an intelligent question to ask" (*New Orleans Daily Picayune*, April 25).

**Aeronauts or astronauts?** Though press treatment of the airship mystery overwhelmingly assumed its terrestrial (and usually American) origin, there were both speculations about and reports of otherworldly visitors. Some, again, were obvious jokes. Others were printed, at least ostensibly (and at times only initially), as serious stories. Some examples:

Near Reynolds, Michigan, April 14: At 4:30 a.m. a "flying machine" came down half a mile southwest of the town. A dozen farmers who had watched it maneuvering overhead rushed to the site. Inside the craft was a giant, manlike figure, nine and a half feet tall, whose "talk, while musical, is not talk at all, but seems to be repetition of bellowing. . . . [H]e was almost naked and seemed to be suffering from the heat." One farmer who tried to approach the being was kicked severely enough to suffer a broken hip (*Saginaw Courier-Herald*, April 17).

Near Linn Grove, Iowa, April 15: A large airship passed slowly over the town, heading north, and five men followed it four miles into the country, where it landed. But when the pursuers got within 700 yards of the vessel, it spread out four massive wings and flew away. The occupants tossed out two boulders "of unknown composition." According to witnesses, the beings had extraordinarily long beards and were "queer-looking," making "desperate efforts to conceal themselves" (*Indianapolis Journal*, April 17).

Near Cassville, Indiana, May 3: While riding home at 1 a.m., Edwin Shaffer passed a gravel pit in which sat a cigar-shaped, 40-foot airship. It was "handsomely furnished on the inside and the aerial craft was inhabited by a crew of foreign-tongued midgets who spoke no English" (*Kokomo [Indiana] Daily Tribune*, May 4).

**What happened?** Any effort to uncover the truth about the late-nineteenth-century airship scare comes up against some unhappy realities: newspaper coverage was unreliable; no independent investigators ("airshipologists") spoke directly with alleged witnesses or attempted to verify or debunk their testimony; and, with a single unsatisfactory exception, no eyewitness was ever interviewed even in the 1950s, when some presumably were still living. The sole exception was a retired *San Francisco Chronicle* employee with whom Capt. **Edward J. Ruppelt**, then head of the Air Force's **Project Blue Book**, had a long phone conversation in 1952. Ruppelt, who died in 1960, wrote only:

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He had been a copy boy at the time and remembered the incident, but time had canceled out the details. He did tell me that he, the editor of the paper, and the news staff had seen "the ship," as he referred to the UFO. His story, even though it was fifty-six years old, smacked of others I'd heard when he said that no one at the newspaper ever told anyone what they had seen; they didn't want people to think that they were "crazy."

In 1952 the Los Angeles-based Civilian Saucer Investigation (CSI) invited UFO witnesses to report their sightings. Among the letters CSI received, it later noted, "was a good sprinkling of sightings extending through the '30s and several . . . sightings as early as 1896 [and] 1898." Unfortunately, if these letters still exist, their whereabouts are unknown. In 1990 *Fate* published a letter from a reader who said her late mother, Hilda Stoll Wallace, had seen an airship near Beatrice, Nebraska, in 1897. She "was a child of nine at the time," Audrey M. Wagner wrote. "I have heard her tell many times of the strange air ship (cigar shaped) that she and her family witnessed as it passed slowly over their farm." When asked for further details, Wagner stated she could remember only that her mother had said the object "was similar to dirigibles and was silver in color."

On July 15, 1961, the *Detroit News* carried a brief letter from John B. Rosa, who gave this sketchy account of a sighting he remembered as occurring in 1897, when he was eight years old:



Going down Grand River for my papers, about 4 in the morning (the *Morning Tribune*), the policeman I was with and I saw an object that looked to be about three feet in diameter. It was about 1,000 feet in the air and was heading east. It was [a] silvery color and had a tail about three blocks long. It traveled like those big sea serpents you read about skimming over the top of the water. It made a low hissing noise that we could just hear. My dad[,] who was leaving our home for work, also saw it as it seemed to pass right over our house.

It is safe to assume that no airship inventors flew over America in 1896 and 1897. It is wise to be skeptical of newspaper accounts of meetings with aeronauts. We will never know exactly what happened in 1897. But one defensible interpretation is that, amid all the misperceptions, exaggerations, and fabrications, UFOs—and UFOs of a modern variety—were observed; once in a while, they even touched briefly on the ground (as in the Lake Elmo, Minnesota, incident, a story that has at least the appearance of credibility). After all, cigar- or dirigible-shaped objects have an honored place in UFO lore, and occasionally witnesses have described wings. We have already noted, as well, reports of unambiguously modern UFOs amid the airships: V shapes, eggs, pears, and fast-moving nocturnal lights. It is difficult to believe that even an amused and hugely tolerant newspaper readership would have put up indefinitely with wholly false reports of a wholly bogus phenomenon. Anyway, soon enough the airships would be back.

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## ALIEN TYPES.

→See **Abduction Phenomenon** and **Close Encounters of the Third Kind**.

## ALLINGHAM CONTACT CLAIM.

→See **Hoaxes**.

# AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE UFO SYMPOSIUM

In 1968 Wesleyan University astronomer Thornton Page, chairman of the astronomy section of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), proposed that the AAAS hold a symposium on the UFO phenomenon. Page had had some previous experience with the subject, having served as a member of a panel of scientists convened by the CIA to evaluate UFO data collected by the U.S. Air Force between 1947 and 1952 (see **Robertson Panel**).

Page's proposal ignited a furious protest by conservative scientists. A particularly explosive response came from Edward U. Condon, a former AAAS president. At the time Condon was directing a government-funded UFO-investigative enterprise, formally known as the **University of Colorado UFO Project** and informally as the Condon Committee. Though the project was launched allegedly to



conduct an objective, independent inquiry, Condon privately held an antagonistic view of the subject.

Condon circulated a letter warning that the AAAS symposium would give the “UFO charlatans” undeserved credibility. But AAAS president Walter Orr Roberts resisted the pressure and steadfastly backed Page and fellow astronomer Carl Sagan in their efforts. More skeptical than Page (himself no wild-eyed believer), Sagan felt that such a symposium would confront “unscientific claims and methods with the power of the scientific method” and demonstrate “the application of scientific thinking to problems of human interest,” as he wrote in a letter to symposium participants, AAAS officials, and other interested persons.

The AAAS board approved the symposium for the December 1968 meeting in Dallas but then postponed it for a year, in part because of the continuing opposition by conservative, well-positioned scientists. The symposium was finally held on December 26 and 27, 1969, at the AAAS convention in Boston. Though invited to participate, Condon declined. UFO debunker **Donald H. Menzel**, who consented after much grumbling about having to appear alongside UFO proponents **J. Allen Hynek** and **James E. McDonald**, was prevented from participating because of heart problems; Roberts read his paper.

Participants included scientists on both sides of the UFO controversy. Astronomer (and former **Project Blue Book** consultant) Hynek and physicist McDonald defended the proposition that UFOs are extraordinary phenomena, while astronomer Menzel—or at least his paper—attacked UFOs as a “modern myth.” Condon Committee investigators William K. Hartmann and Franklin Roach provided other skeptical perspectives. Other speakers addressed specific technical issues and social and psychiatric aspects. Sagan rejected ufology’s **extraterrestrial hypothesis** (ETH) on *a priori* grounds, and physicist Philip Morrison pronounced that “after a couple of years of fairly systematic listening and reading” he had “no sympathy left” for the ETH.

The two most important papers, McDonald’s and Menzel’s, unlike the others, focused not on broad statements and general principles but on scrutiny of specific cases. McDonald in particular drew on his own investigations, based on Blue Book documents and interviews with witnesses, of radar/visual and other evidential reports. The paper, titled “Science in Default,” remains a major scientific statement arguing for the reality of UFOs.

Cornell University Press published the proceedings in 1972, under the title *UFOs—A Scientific Debate*.

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## ANCIENT ASTRONAUTS.

→See Anomalous Aerial Phenomena Before 1800.

## ANDREASSON ABDUCTION CASE.

→See Abduction Phenomenon.



Among the most peculiar—and rare—of phenomena associated with UFO sightings is a substance called “angel hair.” The most famous angel-hair case occurred in France in 1952.

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On October 17 residents of Oloron saw a large cigar-shaped structure in the blue early-afternoon sky. The witnesses included the family of Jean-Yves Prigent, general superintendent of the local high school. Prigent reported:

In the north, a cottony cloud of strange shape was floating against the blue sky. Above it, a narrow cylinder, apparently inclined at a 45-degree angle, was slowly moving in a straight line toward the southwest. I estimated its altitude as two or three kilometers. The object was whitish, nonluminous, and very distinctly defined. A sort of plume of white smoke was escaping from its upper end. At some distance in front of the cylinder, about 30 other objects were following the same trajectory. To the naked eye they appeared as featureless balls resembling puffs of smoke. But with the help of opera glasses it was possible to make out a central red sphere, surrounded by a sort of yellowish ring inclined at an angle. The angle was such as to conceal almost entirely the lower part of the central sphere, while revealing its upper surface. These “saucers” moved in pairs, following a broken path characterized in general by rapid and short zigzags. When two saucers drew away from one another, a whitish streak, like an electric arc, was produced between them.



All these strange objects left an abundant trail behind them, which slowly fell to the ground as if dispersed. For several hours clumps of it hung in the trees, on the telephone wires, and on the roofs of houses.

According to press accounts, a dentist named Balestra, who had observed the objects and the fall, got caught in the material and was unable to free himself until he cut it, at which point the threads re-gathered themselves and rose into the air. If this indeed happened, it is the only known instance of ostensibly intelligent behavior on the part of angel hair.

When witnesses picked up the material and rolled it into a ball, it turned gelatinous and vanished—another frequently (though not universally) reported characteristic. In fact, this characteristic

was to be reported 10 days later by residents of another French town, Gaillac, where at 5 p.m. an identical appearance of cigar, attendant saucers, and angel hair occurred. After 20 minutes the UFOs were gone, but the angel hair continued to fall for a while afterwards. Because the material vanished, none of it could be analyzed.

In *Weather* (4 [1949]: 121-22) P. R. Bishop reported the experience of an unnamed colleague who on September 26, 1948, saw, from the backyard of his house in Port Hope, Ontario, an

object resembling a star moving rapidly across the sky. . . . More of these objects came sailing into view over the ridge of the house, only to disappear when nearly overhead. With field glasses I was able to see that each was approximately spherical, the center being rather brighter than the edges. The glasses also showed quite a number at such heights that they were invisible to the naked eye. . . . Also visible now and then were long threads, apparently from spiders. Some of these were seen to reflect the light over a length of three or four yards. . . . Each was more or less horizontal, moving at right angles to its length.

The material appeared only among the lower UFOs, whose altitude the witness estimated at 300 feet.



Angel hair sample collected in Ichinoseki City, Japan. (Fortean Picture Library)



Craig Phillips, who would become director of the National Aquarium, observed a fall of angel hair (but no accompanying UFO) off the Florida coast in the summer of 1957. He and two other scientists were collecting specimens for the Miami Seaquarium (of which Phillips was curator) when, over a two-hour period, as they sailed northward toward the Keys, they “observed occasional strands of what appeared to be very fine cobwebs up to two or more feet in length, drifting down from the sky and occasionally catching in the rigging of our craft.” Phillips explained to his companions that “very young spiders on hatching will frequently pay out long strands of silk from their spinnerets until the wind catches them and they eventually become airborne.” Yet as the three began collecting the material, they were puzzled by the absence of spiders. Phillips wrote:

With the intention of examining the strands under my laboratory microscope when we reached the Seaquarium, I carefully placed several of them inside a mason jar, allowing them to cling to the inside of the glass before I capped it. Under high power I had hoped to see the tiny adhesive droplets that adorn most but not all spider webs, and were those present, there would be little doubt of their true nature. However, when I uncapped the jar later in my office, no trace of the web material could be found. This phenomenon is to me still unexplained, and I have seen nothing comparable to it before or since.

Reports of angel hair have been rare over the past three decades—hardly what would be expected if the material were indeed mere spider webs.

One spectacular exception occurred on May 4, 1981, at Danville, Pennsylvania. Shortly after 2 p.m., as he was pulling up to his home on a motorcycle, William F. Hummer noticed “cobwebs” hanging over houses, telephone wires, and parked cars. Wispy material was raining from the sky. As he recalled in an interview seven years later, “There was something up near the sun moving around.” Through binoculars he saw “these things—discs—working back and forth, and this stuff was coming down continuously. It was all over the place. It was like a giant spiderweb, but when you touched it, it evaporated.”

A man delivering oxygen to Hummer’s ailing mother tried to pick up a piece of the material, but it evaporated in his hand. He and Hummer watched the UFOs as they darted overhead in groups of twos and threes. Once, when one was positioned so that Hummer could observe it with his back to the sun, he finally got a good look. “It was round and metal with a dome and a kind of peak on it,” he recalled. “It flew off one way and tilted down, and I got it good in the binoculars. Then it shot back the other way without turning around or anything.”

At 2:30 Marie Hummer, William’s sister, showed up. “Way, way up,” she remembered, “you could see big masses of this stuff . . . flying around for a long time.” Her brother would recall that the material “was white and like ash or dandelion spores. You could crunch it up in your hand, and it was gone.”



Good data on angel-hair samples are as rare as angel-hair reports. Until we know more, the nature of the phenomenon will remain a mystery.

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## ANIMAL MUTILATIONS AND UFOS.

→See Dark Side.

## ANOMALOUS AERIAL PHENOMENA BEFORE 1800

Not even UFOs are new things under the sun. The twentieth century did not invent them; rather it inherited an age-old preoccupation of mankind with strange sights in the sky, and a rich legacy of observations preserved in writing as worthy of remembrance for as long as historical records have existed. Human ideas about the nature of those sights have changed in slow succession over the centuries, and a history of these ideas divides into three distinct eras. The prevailing modern view equates aerial mysteries with machinery of advanced design, always a step ahead of current technology, a notion that set in during the late nineteenth century with the appearance of unidentified **airship sightings** and continued into this century with mystery aircraft, **foo fighters**, **ghost rockets**, flying saucers, and

UFOs. Mechanical wonders have supplemented and, in large part, supplanted the idea of anomalous natural phenomena that took hold in the eighteenth century and dominated the nineteenth. In naturalistic terms anything mysterious in the sky had to be peculiar meteors, auroras, or electrical discharges, freak manifestations of astronomy or the atmosphere.

By far the longest era of belief lasted from earliest times until the eighteenth century and survives even today. In this conception any strange sight in the sky originated with supernatural powers, with the appearance due to the passage of a supernatural being, or betokening a message from such things. The modern world view separates the human from the natural realms, with mind, morality, and society unique to the human sphere, while amoral forces operate with machinelike regularity in the natural sphere.

No such strict separation characterized the supernatural world view. Natural objects possessed animate properties, and an invisible world of gods, spirits, and demons interacted with the physical world on an everyday basis. Mind, emotional sympathy, and moral obligation bound the human and nonhuman realms together in a tight whole. The very structure of the universe had an intimacy forgotten today. A tripartite cosmology of an upper or heavenly realm of the gods, a middle level of earth where mortals lived, and an underworld of the dead or malevolent spirits located the three levels in close proximity. Mountains and caves provided access from one level to another, and a sacred tree might have roots in the underworld even as its branches reached into heaven. The otherworld always bided just around the corner. Traffic between here and there was so commonplace that a human might encounter the supernatural at any step.

Interactions between humans and the supernatural otherworld could happen through direct contact, when gods descended to earth or ghosts appeared to the living, or through visions, a form of direct contact in nonphysical mode. Visionary tours of heaven and hell created an extensive literature in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions. Apparitions offered another type of supernatural manifestation, more substantial than visions but less than fully physical. The term often applies to appearances of the Virgin Mary, a complex type of encounter prominent from medieval times to the present. A broad collection of appearances covering the most UFO-like aerial phenomena is the "signs and wonders" category. Sights of this type qualified as both unusual and meaningful, bearing a message from the gods to reveal their displeasure or future intentions. The ancient Romans recognized prodigies, portents, and omens as signs of divine will, some with social, others with purely personal significance, and Christian writers adopted these concepts under the collective term of "divine providences."

Signs and wonders could mean events as simple as a horse stumbling, as natural as lightning striking a church steeple. Natural disasters like an earthquake or hailstorm readily suggested divine anger or supernatural malice. In a time when close ties between the human and nonhuman realms were taken for granted, any



event seemed to convey meaning. Of all such events, the most spectacular, most recorded, and most puzzled-over prodigies were the celestial anomalies. The skies might proclaim the uniqueness and importance of certain individuals, with a new star announcing the birth of a divine being or a comet proclaiming the death of a king. Comets, swords appearing in the air, or bloodlike lights in the sky have long been regarded as death omens. Signs like a ship sailing in the air sometimes indicated a disaster at sea, but such appearances did not always herald gloomy tidings; they might arouse nothing more than a sense of wonder from observers and recorders.

People described similar anomalies throughout the long era of supernatural UFOs, whether the time was Roman antiquity, the Middle Ages, or the seventeenth century, the place Europe, China, Japan, Babylonia, or Islamic countries. The Babylonians compiled books of omens as far back as 1000 B.C. The Chinese and the ancient Egyptians also recorded unusual astronomical phenomena over the centuries. Some tantalizing stories sprinkle ancient mythology, such as the Egyptian myth that the sun god Ra lived on earth and ruled the people until his subjects turned against him and set up an ambush as he sailed the Nile. Ra's son Horus heard of this plot and assumed the form of a brilliant flying disc to attack the rebels, but Ra did not allow all humans to be killed. He then departed the earth and thereafter sailed only the celestial Nile.

Our knowledge of observations and beliefs is most comprehensive for European history. The ancient Greek historians paid little attention to prodigious events, but Roman historians such as Livy and Dio Cassius were much better disposed to recording strange aerial events along with more mundane affairs. The Romans divided into believers and skeptics. The believers accepted prodigies as matters of utmost concern and carried out purification rituals as needed, whereas the orator and statesman Cicero represented the attitude of a questioning elite when he condemned a willingness to see an omen in every happenstance and ridiculed his countrymen who believed that Jupiter would communicate his will through the cackling of chickens. Yet faith in prodigies persisted among the literate and presumably thrived among the common people. The name of **Charles Fort** (1874-1932) now attaches to aerial lights, falling fish, black snows, and other "Fortean" phenomena, but he had a predecessor as early as A.D. fourth century, an obscure Roman writer named Julius Obsequens, who compiled a book of similar accounts drawn from Livy's history. In the latter days of the Empire, these happenings had become matters of independent interest.

The Middle Ages began with the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century. Christianity had already become the dominant religion, and Church Fathers such as Augustine and Orosius adopted Roman prodigies as valid occurrences. Aerial crosses became numerous, and angels replaced flying gods, but pagan anomalies continued largely unchanged in a Christian world. Monastic writers chronicled the history of their time in lists of significant events with little interpretation or commentary. This form of historical record was ideal for preserving strange events, and



the chronicles of Matthew Paris or Roger of Wendover mingle many sights in the sky alongside deeds of the king or happenings of the Crusades. Theologically minded writers accepted prodigies as forerunners of the end of the world, but they also looked with caution on such sights as possible deceits of demonic powers or, with a skeptical sophistication to belie the popular impression that the entire period was a long dark age, regarded aerial phenomena as part of God's natural order not understood by man.

Plague, war, and religious uncertainty in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries cultivated fertile ground for supernatural belief. Marian apparitions increased, fears of witchcraft intensified, and apocalyptic expectations lent new urgency to signs in the sky. The great harvest of supernaturalism followed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries during the Protestant Reformation and the resulting religious wars. With old certainties upset, fear sharpened interest in anything supernatural.

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Hermann Schaden's sketch of a flaming celestial object that appeared in Germany in 1493. (Fortean Picture Library)



Leading religious figures such as Martin Luther reaffirmed that signs must precede the end of the world, and Puritan belief fostered awareness of the supernatural by emphasis on a daily struggle between God and Satan in the worldly arena. The invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century enabled dissemination of topical news at an unprecedented rate and favored the vernacular languages. Readers wanted sensational rumors and stories, and publishers were glad to oblige.

Rediscovery of the prodigy book of Obsequens in 1508 set off a flood of similar works. The most comprehensive was the *Prodigiorum ac Ostentorum Chronicon* of Conrad Lycosthenes, which appeared in 1557 at Basel. The author declared his ambition to record every prodigy that had appeared from the beginning of the world to his present day, combing the Bible, ancient histories, medieval chronicles, and recent sources for “Fortean” items. His English translator, Stephen Bateman, entered into the spirit of the enterprise by updating the chronicle to 1581 and adding materials from sources unavailable to Lycosthenes. Bateman took seriously the apocalyptic mission of prodigies and gave his book an alarming title: *The Doome Warning All Men to the Judgment*.

One of the most noteworthy English collections appeared in three installments during 1661 and 1662, titled *Mirabilis Annus*, or the Year of Prodigies and Wonders. The Protestant theologian John Calvin said that miracles occurred every day, hoping thereby to discourage undue popular interest in them, but his words had the opposite effect on the anonymous author of *Mirabilis Annus*. This writer set out to prove Calvin literally correct by gathering enough prodigious events of the air, land, and sea to prove that they did indeed happen almost daily. God so often favored the Puritan cause in these pages that the Royalists accused the author of fabricating his prodigies for political ends and sought without success to arrest him.

Book-length collections by Johann Wolf and Johannes Pretorius appeared in Germany, by Pierre Boaistuau and Simon Goulart in France. English readers could turn to E. Fenton’s *Certaine Secrete Wonders of Nature* (1559), John Vicars’s *Prodigies and Apparitions, or England’s Warning-Pieces* (1642), John Gadbury’s *Natura Prodigiorum* (1660), or Nathaniel Crouch’s *The Surprising Miracles of Nature and Art* (1683). From America the Puritan minister Increase Mather published *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* (1684), and his witch-hunting son Cotton the *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702). An even larger literature consisted of shorter works with titles like *Strange News, or the Historie of Strange Wonders* (1561), *Looke up and See Wonders* (1628), and *The Warnings of Germany* (1638), a list of dire warnings accompanying the Thirty Years’ War. Most common of all were pamphlets a few pages long detailing “Strange News” of some recent incident to readers.

If this literature reflected the learned side of beliefs about aerial anomalies, the common people held a bounteous store of their own in folklore. Collecting of these accounts began in earnest only in the nineteenth century, leaving questions about how closely learned and popular beliefs compared during the age of supernatural UFOs. The fact remains that medieval chroniclers like Giraldus Cambrensis

and Gervase of Tilbury referred to fairies or ghostly manifestations little different from later folklore, and Reformation-era writers on ghosts and witchcraft included many familiar folklore motifs. The luminous phenomena associated with fairies, spirits, and death omens seem largely unchanged for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years.

**Reports of aerial anomalies from the supernatural era.** Most pre-1800 reports describe familiar astronomical or meteorological phenomena with nothing more mysterious about them than a quaintness of terminology. Comets, meteors, parhelia, and aurorae attracted the interest of chroniclers whether in Rome, England, China, or Persia. Stars with broom-tails, torches flashing through the sky, fiery appearances in the night, or multiple suns comprise most of the oddities recorded, and betray their natural identities with transparent ease.

Other appearances evolve into complex apparitions too fantastic to believe. Livy says that in 214 B.C. at Hadria, "an altar appeared in the sky with men in white robes standing around it." While the Romans besieged Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Josephus reports that before sunset "there were seen in the sky . . . chariots and regiments in arms speeding through the clouds." From Japan in 643, "five colored banners and umbrellas shone in the sky, and descending, hung over the Temple to the sound of various music." Dunstable, England, 1188: "The heavens opened . . . a cross appeared, very long and of wonderful magnitude, and it appeared as though Jesus Christ was fastened thereon with nails, and crowned with thorns," according to the *Annals of Roger de Hoveden*. One of history's most famous apparitions appeared in 312 to the Roman Emperor Constantine, then a pagan, who according to Church historian Eusebius saw a cross in the sky with an accompanying inscription that read, "In this sign, conquer." Swearing allegiance to Christ, Constantine won his battle and became the first Christian emperor. Some Reformation-era writers described scenes of aerial battles with such elaborate attention to arms, armor, horses, artillery, and maneuvers that an epic movie seemed to play out against the sky.

Sights in the sky often accompanied important events and personages on earth. Plutarch tells that a bright flame issued from heaven to hover over the ship of the Greek commander Timoleon in 343 B.C., and this fire guided the ship to its destination. A cometlike appearance with the shape of a dragon heralded the birth of King Arthur, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth. Over many nights while the Turks besieged Constantinople in 1453, "a fire descended from the sky, stood over the City, and enveloped her with light all night long." This sign of God's favor for the Christians depressed the sultan, and he prepared to withdraw; but the light ceased to appear, and the Turks took heart, believing they had God on their side at last.

Many accounts of aerial phenomena accompany the presence of gods or saints. Biblical accounts include the pillar of fire and pillar of cloud that guided the Israelites out of Egypt, a fiery chariot that took the prophet Elijah into heaven, Ezekiel's vision of the wheel, the Star of Bethlehem, and the ascension of Jesus into a cloud. Saints' legends are rich in supernatural lights. According to the *Life of St. Columba*, a priest found his house illuminated by a bright light and discovered a



ball of fire above the face of Columba, then a little boy, as he lay asleep. When Columba died in 579, an immense pillar of fire appeared in the east and ascended. In the Indian *Mahabharata* epic, a light arose from Krishna as he died, while angel-like spirits conducted him to heaven. Legends of the saints are so widespread and standardized that the anomalies appear more like folkloric motifs, for writers to include as an expected part of the story, rather than reports of genuine events.

Fiery appearances sometimes take on spectacular characteristics, though their nature remains obscure. Bateman recounts a great star seen in France one night in 1537. This star spread out little by little until it "took the form of a whitish circle, whereof afterwards through a great violence of the wind flames were rained upon the earth," and burned many things. He also tells of a case in 1194 when ravens "of huge greatness flying in the air from place to place, were seen to carry in their bills . . . burning coals, with which they set houses on fire." This legend of ordinary or monstrous birds carrying fire appears in Pliny, Dio Cassius, Obsequens, and several medieval chronicles.

Another mysterious fire is the wildfire, a term for runaway brushfires or even gunpowder in Elizabethan times but also indicative of a recurrent and mysterious phenomenon. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* note outbreaks several times during the eleventh century but give little hint about its appearance or nature. Florence of Worcester says of the occurrences of 1048 that "the wild fire, which none did understand, killed many men and animals all over England. . . . There came fires in the air, commonly called 'woodland fires', which destroyed towns, standing corn in the fields." Geoffrey Gaimar's *History of the English* gives an even more intriguing portrait—a fire burned in the air, then descended to earth to burn woods and plains before revolving upward into the air again and falling into the sea. Another outbreak in 1693-94, reported in Camden's *Brittania* and John Evelyn's diaries, began as a "fiery exhalation" arising out of the sea, spreading in breadth, and traveling inland where it burned straw, hay, and grass, but not trees. According to some reports, the fire was a weak blue flame. A letter to the *London Times* on October 5, 1877, reported mysterious lights moving inland from the sea in Wales, and even as late as 1953, mysterious fires occurred in the same area.

Numerous folkloric accounts describe luminous phenomena associated with death omens, ghosts, witches, and the will-o'-the-wisp, while fairy sightings sometimes bring to mind accounts of UFO landings and occupants today. Prodigy collector Nathaniel Crouch writes in *The English Empire in America* that the Indians observe a flame over their wigwams before a death occurs. In about 1680 "I was called out once about twelve a clock . . . and plainly perceived it mounting into the air over a church. . . . You may certainly expect a dead corpse in two or three days." Smaller lights called "corpse candles" appeared in Wales to announce a death, often following the course a coffin would take a few days later in the funeral. Holinshed's *Chronicle* contains an account characteristic of another type of supernatural light, the will-o'-the-wisp, though its wide distribution and long duration, over November and December 1394, set this case apart from the usual appearances: "A certain thing



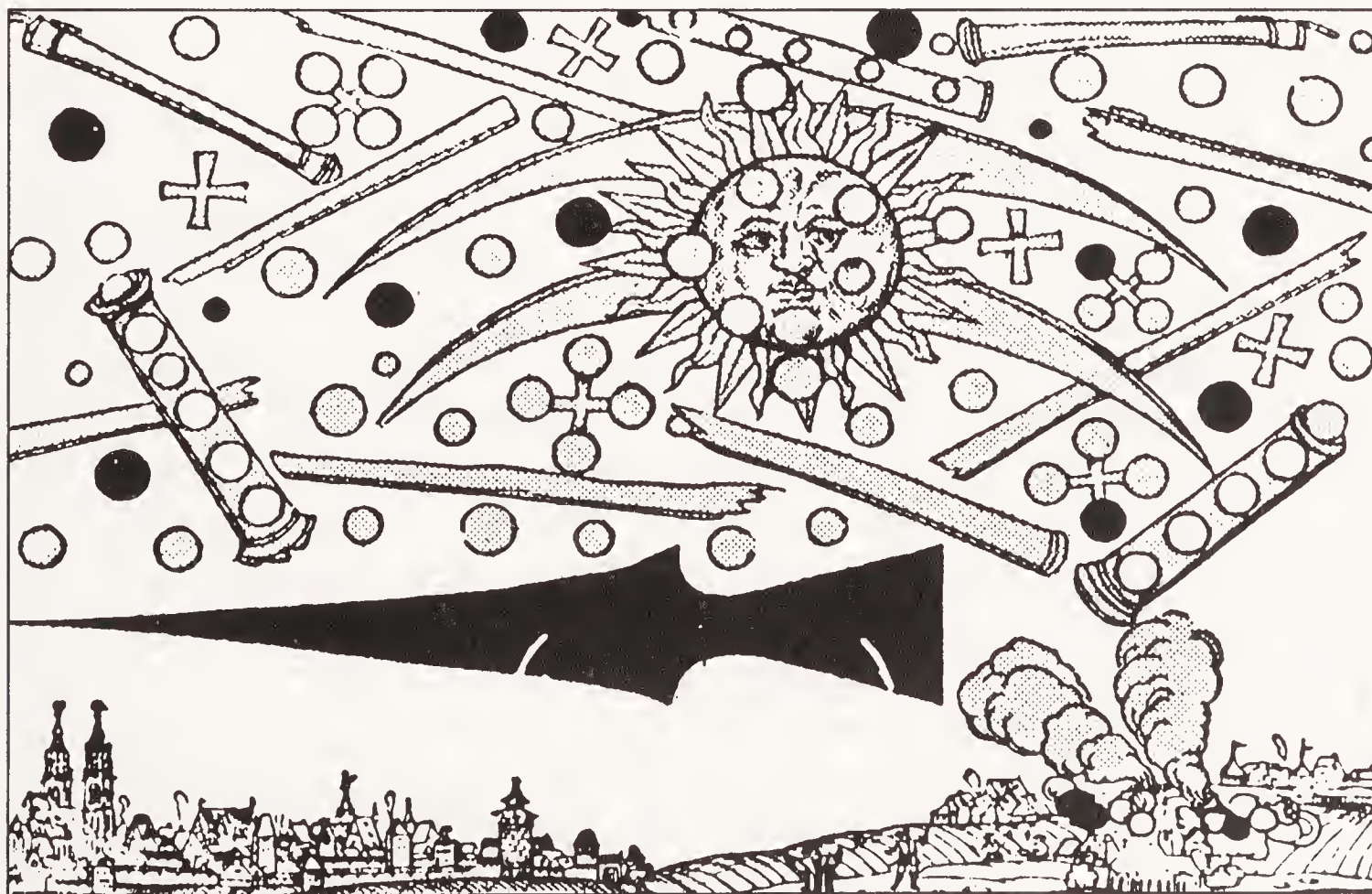
appeared in the likeness of fire in many parts of . . . England . . . every night. This fiery apparition, oftentimes when anybody went alone, it would go with him, and would stand still when he stood still," but when many people traveled together, the object stayed far off. "To some it appeared in the likeness of a turning wheel burning; to othersome round in the likeness of a barrel, flashing out flames of fire at the head; to others in the likeness of a long burning lance."

Ghostly lights haunted Boston Harbor in 1644, according to John Winthrop: "About midnight three men . . . saw two lights arise out of the water . . . in form like a man, and went a small distance . . . and were vanished away." A week later two moonlike lights arose, neared one another, separated, then neared again, repeating this motion until they vanished beyond a hill. The appearance occurred near the place where a ship blew up not long before. After a greedy man died in Japan in 1686, a fiery ball flew from his village to a place where many oil lamps burned. Shots and arrows fired at the specter had no effect, and one man who drew close to it saw a furious human head blowing fire from its mouth. A case of witchcraft from Cotton Mather tells of a man who saw a light the size of a half-bushel and struck it some 40 blows with a stick, feeling a palpable substance. Something threw him onto the ground, and he had difficulty finding his way home, but the next day a neighbor woman and suspected witch "was in a miserable condition" as though she had been struck with many blows.

Accounts of a furious supernatural host rushing through the air, most often known as the Wild Hunt, is common in the folklore of northern Europe. Lights in some form usually accompany this apparition, either a lantern or the fiery eyes of dogs and humans or the flaming breath of horses. Sometimes the Hunt swoops

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This illustration from a Nuremberg, Germany, broadsheet depicts an aerial event witnessed on April 14, 1561. (Fortean Picture Library)



down and abducts a night traveler and leaves him at some distant place, often deprived of a finger and his senses. A bright light seen in the air over western Germany in the 1850s or 1860s was called the "Devil's Army," probably a synonym for the Wild Hunt, and in 1897 some German immigrants in Iowa connected this appearance with the headlight reported in phantom airship sightings then current.

Fairylore parallels many UFO phenomena, from simple accounts of flying lights to **abductions** and visits to an otherworldly fairyland. Most fairy legends date from nineteenth- or twentieth-century collections, but medieval records contain some of these stories. Giraldus Cambrensis reports that green fairy children once appeared from the underground fairy world, and he tells the story of Elidurus, a boy who found the entrance to fairyland and visited there as a guest, seeing that it had a bright sky but no sun, like the otherworld sometimes described by abductees. One much later report from the Isle of Man gives an eyewitness account of a man traveling home at night when he saw a circle of supernatural light; coming in twos and threes he saw "a great crowd of little beings smaller than Tom Thumb and his wife. . . . They moved back and forth amid the circle of light, and they formed in order like troops drilling." An especially UFO-like fairy legend is the rock, hill, or prehistoric burial mound that rises on pillars some nights during fairy festivities. Brilliant light streams out from underneath, and little beings dance around inside—but any mortal who joins them for what seems an hour or so may return home only to find that 40 years or more have passed, a motif known as the "supernatural lapse of time in fairyland." Two collectors of English fairylore heard a story about a man who came upon a party of fairies one night and hid to watch unobserved. The fairies soon discovered him, then hurried up a ladder stretching from the ground into a cloud. When they all reached the top, they pulled up the ladder and closed the cloud.

For all the lights or apparitional forms in the pre-1800 literature, some reports describe actual aerial vehicles. Ezekiel's wheel was "a wheel in the middle of a wheel. When they went, they went upon their four sides, and they turned not when they went" (Ezekiel 1:4-17). The Indian *Ramayana* epic includes many references to aerial chariots, "a silver car with weapons hung in racks that shone like lanterns . . . with many fan-blades spinning and silver blades all flashing." Ships in the air figure in Livy's history of Rome for 218 and 173 B.C., but they especially favored Irish skies. As worshippers emerged from a church, they found a ship's anchor hooked in an arch of the building and saw a man descend the rope as if he swam underwater from the ship above. Before the man could free the anchor, the people seized him, and he seemed about to drown until the bishop ordered him released. He swam through the air back up to the ship, and the crew cut the rope. Gervase of Tilbury retells the same story but locates it in England.

**UFO-like phenomena.** Few pre-1800 anomalies resemble modern UFOs, and genuine unknowns are fewer still. Saucer-shaped objects are exceptionally rare. The Roman writer Pliny says that in 100 B.C. "a burning shield" darted across the sky over Rome at sunset, throwing out sparks, and Obsequens reports an almost identical object.

These objects are probably meteors. A more impressive report from chronicles of Charlemagne's time tells that the German Saxons revolted against the Franks in A.D. 776. As the Saxons stormed the castle at Syburg, on to the Ruhr, a great number of people inside the walls and out "saw the likeness of two shields red with flame wheeling over the church." The Saxons fled in terror on seeing this "miracle."

Other accounts of potentially meteoric UFOs are puzzling, if not very convincing. Livy records that a big rock flew through the air at Reate in 212 B.C. Gregory of Tours notes for A.D. 590 that a light illuminated wide areas in the middle of the night as if it were high noon, and on several occasions fiery globes traversed the sky at night and lighted up the earth. Bateman says that "a ball of black color [went] with a great violence, from amid the moon towards the north," over Halberstadt, Saxony, on April 24, 1546.

The motions of some apparent meteors lend them an unconventional quality. A writer named Daimachus tells of a stone that fell from the sky at Aegos Potami at the time of a battle in 405 B.C. Before the stone fell, it was seen as a vast fiery body in the sky for 75 days, "as if it had been a flaming cloud, not resting, but carried about with several intricate and broken movements." Plutarch adds that "Daimachus needs to have indulgent hearers," if his account is to gain credit. A Chinese general in A.D. 235 watched a red meteor with pointed rays move to and fro three times above his camp, growing in magnitude with each passage, while a Vietnamese record from 1276 tells of a combat between two stars, with the loser falling as a meteor.

The following records recount even stranger phenomena: Spoleto, 91 B.C.: Obsequens says that a "gold-colored fireball rolled down to the ground; increased in size, it seemed to move off the ground towards the east, and was big enough to blot out the sun." Ball lightning might explain this appearance, also another from Bateman, coming from Erdford, Germany, in 1520: "[T]here were seen two suns, and a burning became of a wonderful greatness in the element, which falling down upon the ground destroyed many places. Turning from thence to the air, it put on a round form." He tells of a similar German prodigy in 1543: In the afternoon, "a great comet was seen . . . from whence a fire descending to the earth like a dragon, drunk clean up the brook that was next unto it, from thence flying into a field, consuming a great part of the corn, and mounting up again left behind horrible tokens of these things to be seen."

From *Mirabilis Annus* comes a "landing" report from Hertfordshire in 1660: Three persons traveling before dawn "were on a sudden smitten with a ... terrible flash of lightning; after which the air continued very light." They thought a house was on fire but soon saw "the fire in a great body to ascend, and the sky opening to receive it; and as it went up, three stars ... fell down from it perpendicularly." Some part of the fire in the sky then assumed a sickle shape and remained visible till daylight. A Chinese account from between 1056 and 1063 says that a large "pearl" appeared night after night, emerging first from some swamplands, then



shifting its activities to a nearby lake and later to another. The author received a letter from a friend, saying that one night the pearl appeared nearby over the lake. A door opened in the pearl, and a bright light shone out from inside; trees over a wide area cast shadows. The pearl then flew off into the distance.

Seemingly straightforward auroral or halo phenomena may also include some curious movements. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* for 979 note that witnesses often saw "a bloody cloud, in the likeness of fire; and ... it was most apparent at midnight, and was colored in various ways. Then when it was about dawn it glided away." Roger of Wendover states that at York in December 1200, five moons appeared, one in each quarter of the sky and one overhead. Stars accompanied this fifth moon as it made the circuit of the other four, repeating this motion five times over an hour, "to the wonder of many who beheld it."

In other cases distortion or exaggeration magnifies what is likely to be a natural, though perhaps unusual, manifestation of nature. A large red aurora appeared over Switzerland and Germany on December 30, 1560, but many reports of prodigious events associated with this display reached Joachim Camerarius. In one case there appeared a fiery globe in which a bear and a lion seemed to fight. In another place a globe of fire flew so near the housetops that people feared their houses would burn. Naima's *Annals of the Turkish Empire* reports a black, circular cloud over Hungary one afternoon in 1617. Blood dropped like rain from this cloud. Then a tremendous burst of thunder sent cattle fleeing in all directions, and fiery crosses appeared inside the cloud.

**The passing and persistence of the supernatural era.** If supernatural credulity reached high tide during the Reformation era, an undercurrent of scientific understanding also began to strengthen. A tension had long endured between belief in divine messages and awareness that the messengers were natural phenomena, uncommon perhaps, but regular in action and in no sense miraculous. The solution was a concept of dual causality. Prodigies were natural phenomena and in no sense a violation of nature, but they also related as meaningful tokens to earthly events. This relationship could be causal, as when the Hellenic astronomer Ptolemy explained comets as the result of an overabundance of the element of fire in the upper atmosphere. The same excess that lighted the sky also heated the human spirit to a greater lust for war. Hence comets were both natural phenomena and heralds of strife. Augustine explained the apparition of an aerial battle as the work of demons as they tried to fire up a similar lust.

The relationship might be indicative, a genuine divine message as God used natural processes to forewarn humans of impending disaster, or merely associative, the sort of happening that occurred along with other events worthy of mention but unconnected with them. By 1697, when William Turner published his *Complete History of the Most Remarkable Providences*, the supernatural side of dual causality had attenuated enough for prodigy to become synonymous with any sort of remarkable event. Turner clumped feats of human engineering together with strange



sights in the sky as equal proofs of God's providence. Faith in the supernatural was clearly on the wane.

A growing community of scientific rationalists in the seventeenth century fostered a strictly natural interpretation of aerial phenomena. The English writers Polydore Vergil and John Spencer followed Cicero and argued against the reality of supernatural manifestations, while Edmund Halley's determination that the comet now bearing his name followed a regular orbit drew these most dreaded of prodigies fully into the natural sphere. The founding of organizations like the Royal Society ushered in the second age of "UFO" beliefs, characterized by naturalistic anomalies.

Though the eighteenth century was a time of conceptual transition, naturalistic anomalies replaced supernatural prodigies only by slow degrees. Phantom armies continued to march, at Souter Fell in England during 1735 and on several other occasions; at Chimney Rock, North Carolina, on August 7, 1806, and again in 1811. Even in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries these apparitions persisted, with the *New York World* publishing an account on April 24, 1887, of divisions of infantry seen in the air over Hungary, with the scarlet caps of the soldiers and the flashing sword of the leader visible to the onlookers, who feared the outbreak of a war. A legend arose after the Battle of Mons in 1914 that angels or fifteenth-century bowmen had fought for the British. When the German Field Marshal von Hindenburg died in 1934, "the gray soldiers of the World War appeared in the clouds," by one account, "to give their dead field commander an escort to Tannenburg. . . . In all East Prussia the gray army was clearly and plainly seen."

ANOMALOUS  
AERIAL  
PHENOMENA  
BEFORE 1800

55



Samuel Coccius's illustration of mysterious black globes in the sky over Basel, Switzerland, on August 7, 1566. (Fortean Picture Library)



Supernatural lights also continued to illuminate religious gatherings. During a revival in Ireland in 1859, before several open-air crowds of 600 to 1000 persons each, "a kind of cloud of fire approached in the air, hovered and dipped over the people, rose and floated on some distance, again hovered on ... another revival meeting, and so it continued." The Welsh revivals of 1905 produced many reports of lights or balls hovering around the assemblies but especially near one of the leading evangelists, Mary Jones. Apparitions of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes and other sites were numerous in the nineteenth century, while a spectacular series of apparitions occurred at Fátima, Portugal, in 1917. These appearances culminated on October 13 when some 50,000 witnesses saw the sun turn pale, spin on its axis, and seem to fall from the sky. In recent years a well-publicized series of Marian apparitions have occurred at Medjugorje, Yugoslavia.

**The beginning of naturalistic anomalies.** Eighteenth-century rationalists described many of the same sights their predecessors found unusual, the only difference being that the objects were now natural anomalies divested of any supernatural connotations. A witness reported to *Philosophical Transactions* (43:524-25) a meteor over London on December 16, 1742. This meteor was unusual because it neither looked nor acted as a meteor should—it moved parallel to the horizon, undulated in flight, and remained in sight for half a minute. Moreover, the fiery head was as large as the full moon and seemed surrounded and bisected by a dark frame "like bands of iron."

Other anomalies without precedent in the prodigy literature accumulated alongside the growing body of conventional scientific knowledge. On August 9, 1762, a Swiss astronomer saw through his telescope a large, spindle-shaped body crossing the face of the sun. "This spindle kept continually advancing on the sun's body, from east towards west, with no more than about half the velocity with which the ordinary solar spots move; for it did not disappear till the seventh day of September." Another observer some distance away saw the object, but it crossed a different segment of the sun, indicating that the body was located somewhere between the earth and the sun. Items such as these, gathered in the course of scientific observation with the tools of science, but at odds with the scheme of scientific understanding and thereby excluded or ignored, joined the lengthening "procession of the damned" that Charles Fort would gather and speculate about early in this century.

**Modern uses of pre-1800 anomalies.** Ufologists have long wondered if the phenomenon truly began with the Kenneth **Arnold sighting** in 1947. They adopted phantom airships and many other strange objects reported in earlier times, persuasive or not, as evidence that UFOs enjoyed an age-old pedigree and startled observers long before any airplane or satellite existed to clutter the sky with false alarms. Desmond Leslie's chapters in *Flying Saucers Have Landed* (1953) and Harold T. Wilkins in *Flying Saucers on the Attack* (1954) drew on medieval and other early reports to argue that aircraft and balloons could not explain all reports. Astronomer **Donald H. Menzel** turned to old reports in *Flying Saucers* (1953) for the opposite

reason: to demonstrate that people had always seen mysterious objects in the sky, and just as future understanding accounted for those reports, conventional solutions would soon lay flying saucers to rest.

These two opposing arguments have locked in struggle throughout modern ufological history. The notion that prehistoric alien visitors brought the secrets of culture to primitive humans inspired science-fiction writers for decades, and the Shaver mystery—Richard S. Shaver's stories of advanced ancient races still hiding underground—enjoyed considerable popularity on the eve of the modern UFO era, under the sponsorship of Ray Palmer, then editor of *Amazing Stories* and later an important early advocate of flying saucers. UFO writers George Hunt Williamson and Brinsley le Poer Trench specialized in ancient-visitation speculations through the 1950s and early 1960s.

The true heyday of the "ancient astronaut" movement lasted from the late 1960s till the mid-1970s, after Erich von Däniken's books popularized the idea that superscientific alien visitors built the Great Pyramid and other architectural wonders of antiquity. A trendy literature of dismally researched and reasoned books followed von Däniken's success. Only W. Raymond Drake's *Gods and Spacemen* series reflected any extensive erudition and included prodigies as evidence for long-term visitation. NASA engineer Josef F. Blumrich's *The Spaceships of Ezekiel* (1974) offered a creative but misplaced effort to translate the metaphoric biblical account into a properly engineered spacecraft.

All in all, pre-1800 aerial anomalies amount to natural phenomena seen through pre-scientific eyes. Few of these reports resemble modern UFOs, and few offer any genuine strangeness. Our ancestors recorded odd sights aplenty, but their descriptions confirm only the constancy of human interest in aerial mysteries, not evidence that aliens have flown earthly skies for hundreds or thousands of years. Or to read the evidence another, equally legitimate way, too many layers of belief, interpretation, terminology, and tradition obscure the residue of unidentified cases for anyone at this late date to declare with certainty that people in the distant past witnessed the same UFO phenomenon we know today. —*Thomas E. Bullard*

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## AREA 51.

→See Men in Black.

58

## ARNOLD SIGHTING

The age of flying saucers began on Tuesday, June 24, 1947, just before three o'clock in the afternoon. The man responsible was a respected private pilot and fire-control-equipment salesman named Kenneth Arnold, of Boise, Idaho.

Arnold had spent the earlier part of the afternoon installing equipment at the Chehalis, Washington, Central Air Service, where he learned of a \$5000 reward for the discovery of a C-46 Marine transport that had gone down in the mountains. Arnold was on his way to Yakima but decided to take a side trip to Mount Rainier, site of the crash, in hopes of sighting the wreckage.

In the course of the search, he took a 180-degree turn over Mineral, Washington, and was alarmed by a "tremendously bright flash," apparently in front of him. Fearing he was about to collide with another aircraft, he searched frantically through the sky for the next 20 to 30 seconds. All he could see was a DC-4 far to his left and rear. Then he spotted another flash. Looking to his left and to the north, he found the source: a formation of bright objects moving roughly south

from Mount Baker toward Mount Rainier (the distance between the two mountains is roughly 130 miles).

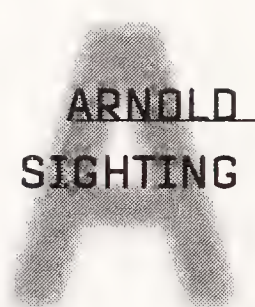
There were nine of them. As he later recalled, "They were flying diagonally in an echelon formation with a larger gap in their echelon between the first four and the last five." The lead object was at a higher elevation than the rest. At first he assumed they were jets, but he could see no tails, and they were moving awfully fast. When they passed over Rainier's peak and moved on to another peak just south of it, he began clocking their speed. They covered the 50-mile distance between peaks in one minute and 42 seconds. Later Arnold estimated that that came to 1700 mph—a figure he could not accept. Even when he arbitrarily knocked 500 mph off, making allowances for errors, the speed seemed impossible.

To estimate their size, he told Air Force investigators,

I compared a zeus fastener or cowl tool I had in my pocket with them, holding it up on them and holding it up on the DC-4 that I could observe at quite a distance to my left, and they seemed smaller than the DC-4; but I should judge their span would have been as wide as the furthest engines on each side of the fuselage of the DC-4.

All the while the objects were swerving in and out of the smaller peaks, flipping from side to side in unison, dipping, and presenting their lateral surfaces. The surfaces reflected the bright sunlight and caused the flashes. All but one of the objects looked like flat discs; the other, darker than the rest, resembled a crescent. When first sighted, they were about 100 miles away. Arnold was moving toward them and got within 23 miles of them. In his words:

I had two definite points I could check them by [Mount Rainier and Mount Adams, 47 miles to the north]; the air was so clear that it was very easy to see objects and determine their approximate shape and size at almost fifty miles that day. I remember distinctly that my sweep second hand on my eight day clock, which is located on my instrument panel, read one minute to 3 p.m. as the first object of this formation passed the southern edge of Mount Rainier. I watched these objects with great interest as I had never before observed airplanes flying so close to the mountain tops, flying directly south to southeast down the hog's back of a mountain range. I would estimate their elevation could have varied a thousand feet one way or another up or down, but they were pretty much on the horizon to me which would indicate they were near the same elevation [9200 feet] as I was. They flew like many times I have observed geese to fly in a rather diagonal chain-like line as if they were linked together. They seemed to hold a definite direction but rather swerved in and out of the high mountain peaks. . . . I could quite accurately determine their pathway due to the fact that there were several high peaks that were a little this side of them as well as higher peaks on the other side of their pathway. . . .



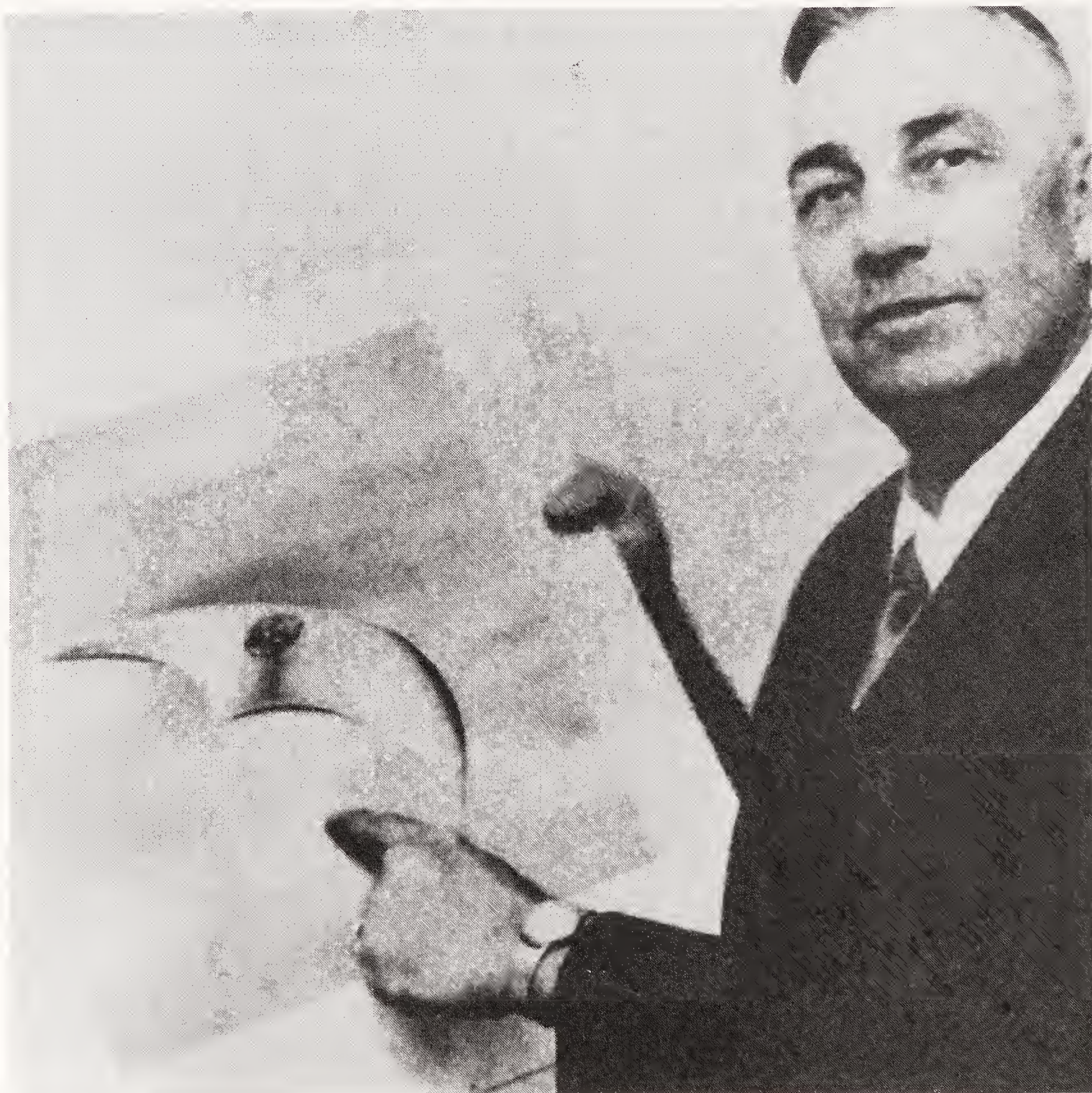


Between Mount Rainier and Mount Adams there is a very high plateau with quite definite north and south edges. Part of this chain-like formation traveled above this plateau toward Mount Adams, while part of the formation actually dipped below the near edge. As the first unit of these craft cleared the southernmost edge of this background, the last of the formation was just entering the northern edge. I later flew over this plateau in my plane and came to a close approximation that this whole formation of craft, whatever they were, formed a chain in the neighborhood of five miles long.

The objects were last seen heading south over the last high peak of Mount Adams. They had been in view for about two and a half minutes.

**Fallout.** Arnold was bewildered, even upset, by the sight, but he did not think in terms of interplanetary interlopers. The objects were surely secret military aircraft or missiles, he reasoned, but how could they have flown at such a remarkable speed?

Kenneth Arnold  
with a sketch of  
one of the craft  
he encountered  
over Mount Rainier  
in 1947.  
(Fortean Picture  
Library)





At Yakima a helicopter pilot dismissed the objects as "just a flight of those guided missiles from Moses Lake," but an unconvinced Arnold flew on to Pendleton, Oregon, not knowing that someone from the Yakima airport had called ahead to say that the pilot of the Callair soon to arrive had seen some strange new "aircraft." A large crowd, already there to attend an air show, was waiting for Arnold. He reported what he had seen, and a discussion followed. The consensus of opinion was that Arnold had seen guided missiles.

The next morning the air show commenced with the arrival of a tri-state air fleet. Arnold's curious encounter had already been forgotten by just about everybody except Arnold himself. Late that morning a stranger stopped Arnold in the streets of downtown Pendleton and said that yesterday he had seen similar "mystery missiles" as they passed over his home in nearby Ukiah.

Arnold went to the office of the *East Oregonian*, Pendleton's only newspaper, and spoke with columnist Nolan Skiff, whose initial skepticism quickly faded in the face of Arnold's obvious sanity and sincerity. Reporter Bill Bequette sat in on the conversation and took notes as Arnold remarked that the objects' movement reminded him of a flat rock bouncing up and down as it skipped across water. Bequette's short account, which went out on the press wires, read in its entirety:

PENDLETON, Ore., June 25 (AP)—Nine bright saucer-like objects flying at "incredible speed" at 10,000 feet altitude were reported here today by Kenneth Arnold, Boise, Idaho, pilot who said he could not hazard a guess as to what they were.

Arnold, a United States Forest Service employee [sic] engaged in searching for a missing plane, said he sighted the mysterious objects yesterday at three pm. They were flying between Mount Rainier and Mount Adams, in Washington State, he said, and appeared to weave in and out of formation. Arnold said that he clocked and estimated their speed at 1200 miles an hour.

Enquiries at Yakima last night brought only blank stares, he said, but he added he talked today with an unidentified man from Ukiah, south of here, who said he had seen similar objects over the mountains near Ukiah yesterday.

"It seems impossible," Arnold said, "but there it is."

Soon Arnold was bombarded with phone calls and requests for interviews, and newspapers were taking note of other sightings of what were being called "flying saucers" or "flying discs." It quickly became apparent that Arnold was not the only, or even the first, sighter of the mysterious discs. There were at least 20 other sightings on the twenty-fourth, all but two in the Pacific Northwest. One of the most interesting took place that afternoon, when prospector Fred M. Johnson observed five or six "round, metallic-looking discs," each about 30 feet in diame-



ter, maneuvering 1000 feet overhead. They may, in fact, have been the objects Arnold was viewing.

Arnold would have seven other sightings, including one in 1952 near Susanville, California, of two craftlike objects, one transparent, which "looked like something alive." He eventually concluded that UFOs are space animals—"living organisms . . . in the atmosphere."

Kenneth Arnold died on January 16, 1984, in a Bellevue, Washington, hospital.

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BARKER, GRAY ROSCOE.

→See Men in Black.

BENDER MYSTERY.

→See Men in Black.

BENNEWITZ EPISODE.

→See Dark Side and Men in Black.

63

## BROOKSVILLE INCIDENT

A man so obscure as to be barely known to most other residents of the rural area where he lived, John F. Reeves, 66, became the focus of international attention in 1965, when he reported an encounter with a UFO and its occupant. Reeves further claimed to have pieces of paper containing messages in what appeared to be an alien language.



Reeves lived in a partially finished house six miles west of Brooksville, Florida (pop. 6000), in a remote location known as the “scrublands.” A longshoreman on a disability pension, Reeves moved to Brooksville from New York with his wife and son in 1961. He opened a trailer park but lost it in 1963. His wife moved back to New York, and his son entered the Navy. Since then Reeves had been living alone.

Around mid-afternoon on Tuesday, March 2, 1965, Reeves walked into a service station-grocery store next to his house. He told John (Red) Wells, the owner, that he had just seen a flying saucer land. Wells, who knew Reeves well, had no trouble believing his story. He later claimed that “after the story got out, three different people came to see me and said they’d seen it too, same time, same locality.”

That evening Reeves visited another neighbor, Estes Morgan, and showed him two pieces of a tissuelike paper with writings on them. Morgan later said, “I held them up to the brightest light in the house and gave them a good going-over . . . . Never in my life had I touched anything like it, so filmy, yet so tough, and containing very long, very fine, dark purple veins or threads. The tissues gave off a strong, acrid smell that I couldn’t identify, either. Nothing around here smells like *that*.”

The next morning Reeves went to the office of the *Brooksville Sun-Journal*, the local weekly newspaper. The Brooksville city clerk also looked at the tissue paper and its alleged alien writings. Someone encouraged Reeves to see William Johnson, owner of Brooksville’s radio station WWJB.

After hearing Reeves’s strange story, Johnson called MacDill Air Force Base, which promised to send out investigators as soon as possible. Then, accompanied by his son Wally, Reeves, and photographer Frank Fish, he went out to the site. Meanwhile someone from the *Sun-Journal* phoned a St. Petersburg radio station, WLCY, which quickly aired a report about a landed UFO, its “robot” occupant, and the alien writings. Evelyn Anderson of St. Petersburg heard the report and notified another St. Petersburg UFO enthusiast, E. R. Sabo. Sabo phoned Robert Snyder, a Clearwater man who headed Florida Unit #2 of the Washington-based **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP). The world was about to descend on Brooksville.

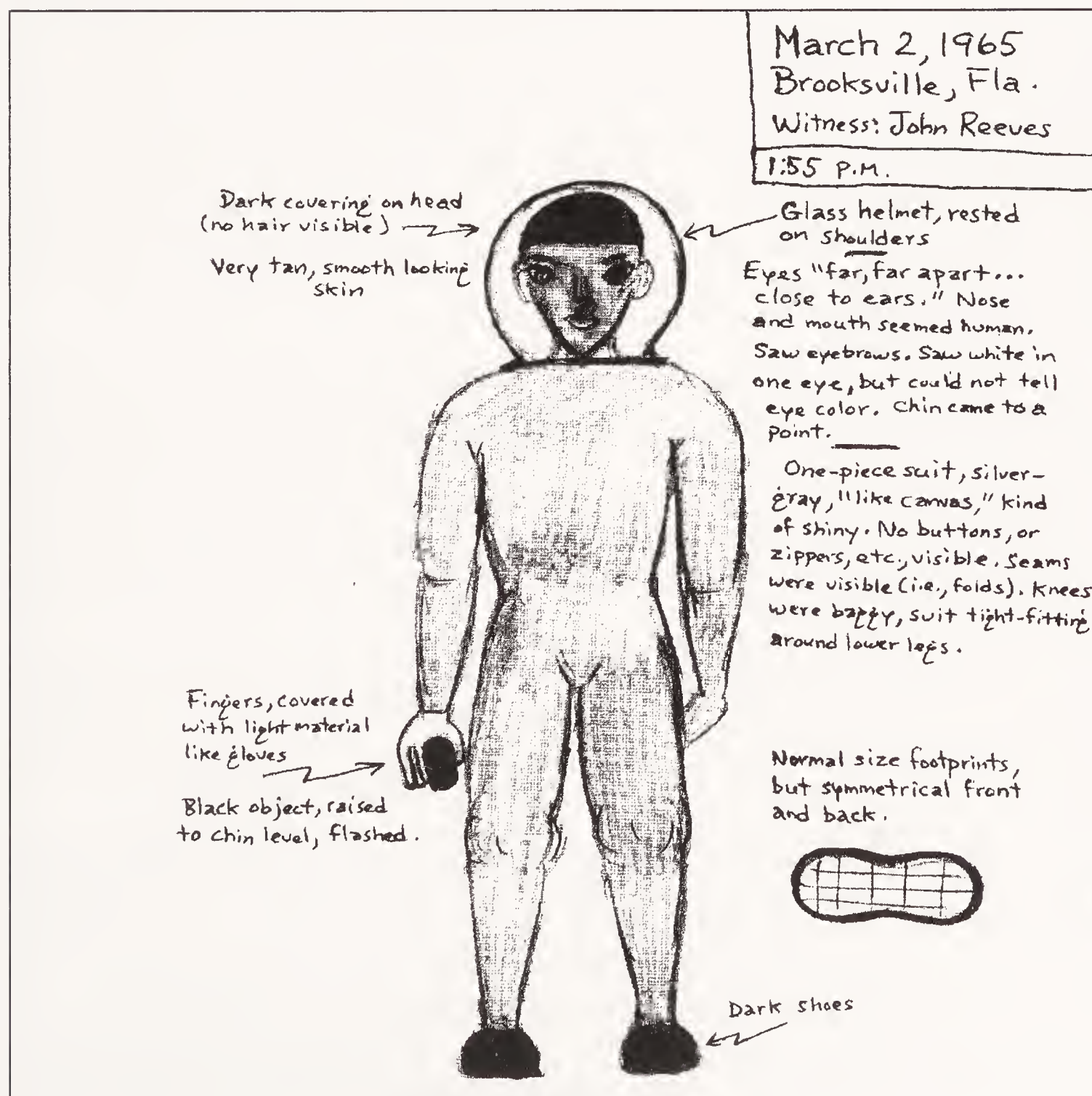
**Reeves’s story.** Early in the afternoon Reeves had been wandering in the scrublands when he spotted a “big flying saucer” sitting in an open clearing on top of a sand hill. Reddish purple and bluish green in color, it rested on four legs and was six feet high and 20 to 30 feet in diameter.

Reeves sneaked to within 100 feet of the craft, then crawled into dense bushes to watch it further. Suddenly he saw something moving on the far side of the object and heading in his direction. A “robot” with a glass dome or space helmet over its head spotted Reeves and came within 15 feet of him.

Though Reeves would persist in calling the figure a "robot"—reasoning that "anything that isn't human has got to be a robot"—he described an essentially humanlike being with a darkly tanned face, five feet tall, clad in a silver-gray canvas material. It had thin white gloves on its hands and metallic-looking boots on its feet. Its eyes were a little farther apart, closer to the ears, and its chin a bit more pointed than a normal person's, and it had a "cylinder" on its back and was wearing a skullcap.

After watching him for a minute and a half, it reached to its left side and produced a round, black object, six or seven inches in diameter. It lifted the device to its chin, and the device flashed twice. Reeves tried to run, but he tripped and fell back down into a sitting position facing the figure, which flashed the round object at him one more time. Reeves thought it was taking his picture.

The figure now walked toward the object. Beneath the craft Reeves could see a small spiral staircase made up of round steps. The being walked up these and



Though John Reeves called this figure a "robot," his description was of a generally humanlike being. (J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies)



into the ship. Once it was inside, Reeves told NICAP investigators, "a lot of little blades around the rim of the saucer started to move in unison like the slats of a venetian blind. They opened and closed. Then the rim started going around counterclockwise. It made a whooshing and rumbling sound as it speeded up its spinning. The staircase pulled up inside. . . . Then the four stilts or legs retracted, and the saucer went straight up with that whooshing sound. I watched, and it was out of sight in less than 10 seconds in the cloudless sky."

At the clearing where the UFO had rested, Reeves found a large number of footprints, round at the heel and toe areas but narrow in the arch. Four holes left by the landing gear stood in a square area, irregularly spaced within a 10-foot range of each other. Each hole was cup-shaped, four inches wide and four inches deep. In the middle of the square, Reeves noticed a wad of loosely folded paper. It consisted, he said, of "two sheets of very strong but very thin tissue. . . . Both were covered with strange writings or marks that looked like Chinese."

**Investigations.** Early on the afternoon of the third, 1st Lt. Edward R. Goettl and three enlisted men arrived in Brooksville from MacDill AFB. They met Reeves and Johnson at Johnson's radio station. After an hour's worth of interviewing, they drove the witness to the encounter site, spoke with him further, and took photographs of the markings, prints, and paper. In his official report, written later that day, Lt. Goettl remarked, "The paper Mr. Reeves claims he found at the landing site is similar to silk span paper used to build model airplanes." The officer judged Reeves to be of "doubtful" reliability. In any case, Reeves had willingly handed over the paper for analysis, which presumably would settle the question of whether or not he had had some kind of unearthly encounter.

The Air Force men took Reeves back to the radio station around 4 p.m. By this time reporters from Tampa, St. Petersburg, and elsewhere were waiting. With Johnson acting as a sort of combination agent/protector, Reeves answered questions until well into the evening. The next morning, Thursday, there were even more reporters and curiosity-seekers. By evening the throngs of gawkers had obliterated most of the alleged "robot" footprints at the site. What little remained was washed away in a rain shower that night.

The circus continued through the weekend. Even so, amid all the hoopla, a few of those who were flocking to Brooksville came with serious purpose. On Saturday, March 6, investigators arrived separately from the Air Force and from NICAP.

The Air Force team consisted of Lt. Goettl, a sergeant, and a civilian scientist named C. W. Bemiss. As a member of the technical staff of Pan American Airways, a major Air Force contractor, Dr. Bemiss worked at the Air Force Eastern Test Range, headquartered at Patrick AFB in Florida. After reading accounts of the Brooksville incident in the press, Bemiss offered to test the site for traces of radiation. Early on the afternoon of the sixth, he and the MacDill investigators examined the location. Bemiss detected no evidence either of radiation or of disturbance

in soil, grass, or leaves. "This type of litter," he wrote in his official report six days later, "is very loose and could be easily moved by a moderately strong air flow." The fact that it hadn't been struck him as suspicious, unless "if a 'sighting' did actually take place, the unknown vehicle must have included a form of propulsion unknown to our science." Bemiss also thought the irregular spacing of the four holes allegedly left by the landing gear raised questions.

The Air Force men did not speak with Reeves that day, but Robert M. Snyder and Robert S. Carr of NICAP spent a great deal of time with him. On the third Carr had called MacDill about the case and been stonewalled by six departments. Finally Capt. Richard Henry, the base's public information officer, reluctantly acknowledged that MacDill already had investigators on site. Carr prevailed on Henry to give him the name of the individual who had alerted the base to the incident, and Carr called William Johnson immediately. Work commitments kept Carr from going to Brooksville that day, but he sent his wife, who purchased a set of photographs, including ones depicting the alien writings, from Frank Fish. The next morning Carr placed the negatives in his safety deposit box.

The next day, in a series of phone conversations, Carr and Snyder advised Johnson, with whom they had managed to establish a rapport, to be cautious in his dealings with would-be exploiters. For example, Tampa's WTVT wanted to have him hypnotically regressed on live television. The NICAP men urged Johnson to shelter Reeves from the press until they could get there themselves. Johnson hid Reeves on Fish's farm.

Meanwhile, on the fifth, Miguel Acoca, chief of *Life's* Miami bureau, contacted Carr. Carr suggested Acoca accompany him and Snyder to Brooksville the next day. He made the suggestion, Carr later told NICAP, "thinking this might prove a good way to shape to NICAP's benefit whatever might appear in *Life* magazine." Carr soon would learn how wrong he was.

At 10 a.m. Saturday, March 6, Snyder, the Carrs, Acoca, and *Life* photographer Burton McNeely showed up at Johnson's radio station. Johnson told them, "I examined the tissues closely. I have never seen or touched anything like them: very light, yet very strong, veined with long threadlike fine dark lines, and almost impossible to tear. I took scissors and clipped off a corner to see if it would burn. It did."

The group then repaired to Fish's farm east of town and spoke with Reeves for two hours. According to Snyder and Carr, "All later agreed that Reeves created the impression of an honest, simple, uneducated, guileless man who had had a very great surprise, a profound experience." He appeared to be in a "mild state of shock."

Reeves invited the investigators to his house, where he talked about his life and showed them copies of musical scores he had composed a quarter of a century earlier. Much interested for reasons Reeves gave no sign of suspecting, the investigators examined the sheet music carefully, and Carr stepped outside with Fish so

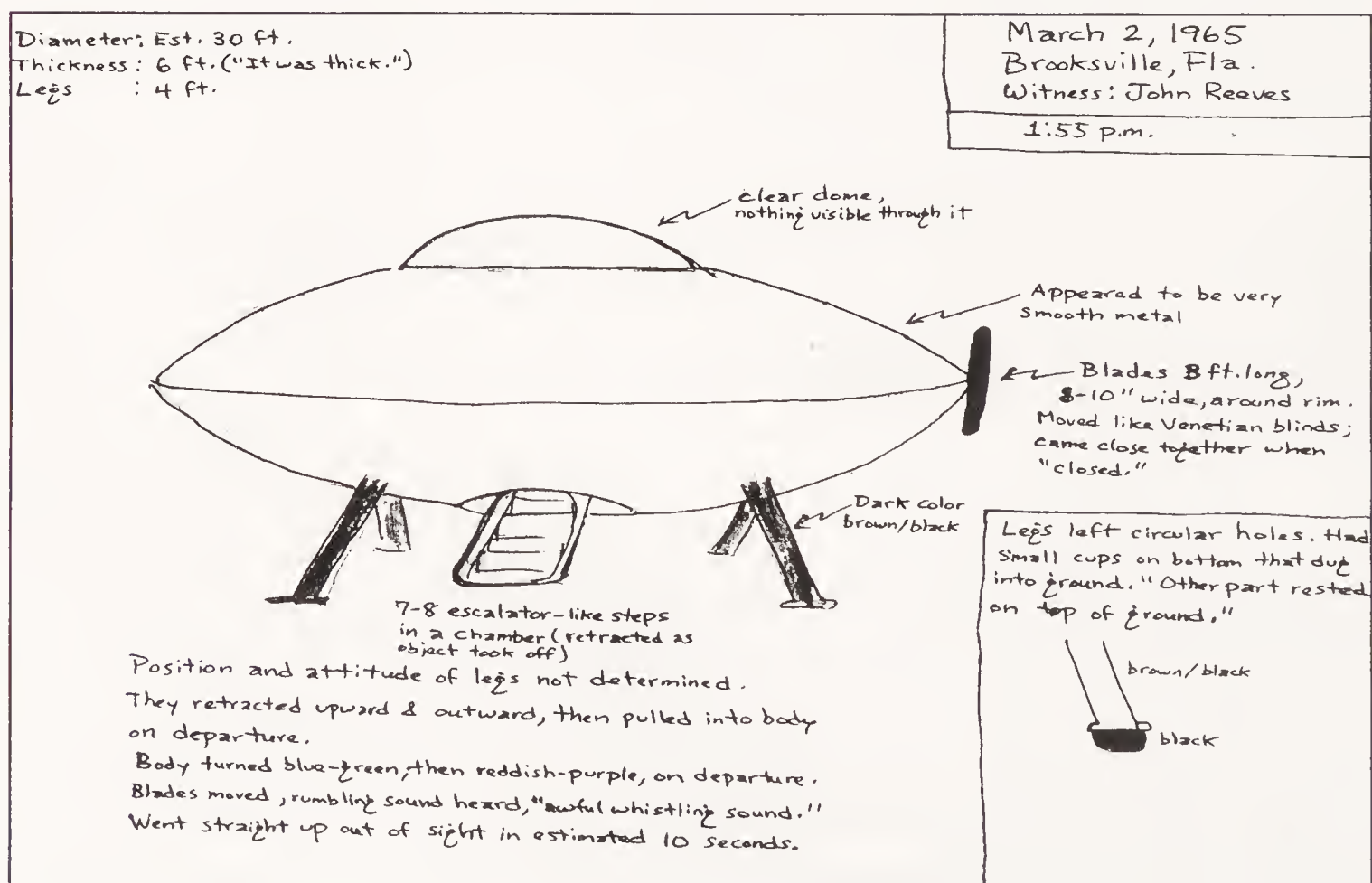


that the latter could photograph one sheet. Everybody but Reeves grasped at once that they now had samples of Reeves's writing that they could compare to those on the tissue materials. Subsequently they concluded that there was no obvious resemblance. They may not have stopped to consider that someone's handwriting may change over a 25- to 30-year period.

In the course of this trip and others made in the next few days, Snyder and Carr interviewed Wells, Morgan, and other Brooksville-area residents. All spoke well of Reeves. The investigators learned that *Life* planned to subject Reeves to a polygraph test. Johnson asked Snyder if he thought that was a good idea, and Snyder replied in the affirmative. He suggested, however, that Johnson record the polygraph interview without telling Reeves that he was doing so. It is not clear what Snyder had in mind, but the tape would prove useful to the ufologists in the dispute about to erupt. In any case, on March 9 Johnson set up recording equipment in the office of Tampa polygraph operator David Allison.

Allison's analysis of the test convinced him that Reeves was not telling the truth. When Snyder heard this two days later from *Life* reporter Acoca, he was so upset that he drove almost at once to Brooksville and picked up Johnson's tapes. That night he played them for NICAP associates, who agreed that Allison had done a poor job. In the pre-test interview he had asked Reeves about his background and forced him to recall a traumatic incident of years before, when he witnessed a murder committed by waterfront gangsters. Thus, once he had been hooked up to the polygraph machine, Snyder and Carr reported to NICAP headquarters, "John Reeves was in such a pitiable condition that the instrument showed confusion, fear, and guilt registering on every question asked—not merely the 'catch' questions."

Reeves made this sketch of the craft he supposedly encountered in Brooksville, Florida, in 1965. (J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies)







After his encounter, Reeves photographed these footprints allegedly left behind by the "robot" alien being. (J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies)

So the ufologists arranged for a polygraph examiner more to their liking, fellow NICAP member E. J. Edwards. Edwards brought Reeves to Orlando (where Edwards lived) on the thirteenth and gave him a polygraph test. Edwards concluded that Reeves "answered all pertinent questions truthfully."

**Tissue of lies?** Meanwhile the Air Force's **Project Blue Book**, which had the tissue papers in its possession, sought to have them analyzed. On March 16 Maj. Hector Quintanilla, Jr., head of Blue Book, wrote the Institute of Paper Chemistry in Appleton, Wisconsin, and asked if it would give immediate priority to an examination of the material. On the twenty-fourth, in a four-page reply, T. A. Howells, chairman of the institute's Technology Section, wrote, "The sample is composed of bast or leaf fibers from any one of a number of plants. Although these fibers are a minor part of the raw

material of the paper industry, their use in some segments of the industry is not uncommon."

At the end of March, Blue Book announced its conclusion that Reeves had hoaxed the story. Among other suspicious features it noted, "The holes which were purportedly caused by the landing gear were straight and appeared to have been scooped or dug as opposed to indentations caused by an object of any sizeable weight." When deciphered, according to Blue Book, the "hieroglyphics" on one page read, "Planet Mars, are you coming home soon? We miss you very much. Why did you stay away too long?"

The Florida NICAP representatives disputed the accuracy of what Blue Book had called a "simple substitution code." Snyder and Edwards complained that the Air Force had one word represented by two different symbols.

On March 31 Reeves wrote Maj. Quintanilla and asked politely for the return of the tissues. Two captains from MacDill delivered them personally to Reeves on the morning of April 13. If this method of transmission was intended to assuage any fears that the Air Force was trying to cover up evidence of extraterrestrial vis-



itation, it failed. The officers had barely driven away before Johnson was on the phone to the NICAP people in Clearwater. The papers the Air Force had returned, he said, were not the ones it had been given.

When Carr met with him on May 1, Johnson produced a sheet of lens tissue that he had just purchased in a local camera store. It was exactly the same as the paper the Air Force had turned over. "Had the originals been on lens tissue," he said, "I would not have believed Reeves, as I still do. The writings look the same, but now the materials are completely different." Reeves's friend Estes Morgan also claimed that the tissue material he had seen prior to the Air Force's first visit was "completely different."

Snyder and Carr would, however, part company in their analysis of what this meant. Snyder thought the Air Force had substituted ordinary tissues and kept the real ones. Carr was sure, on the other hand, that the ordinary tissues were the "real" ones. In his interpretation Reeves had had an authentic UFO encounter, but after speaking with Wells about it and expressing the opinion that no one would believe him, he went home, brooded on the matter, and finally decided that he would produce his own "proof."

On June 15 Elizabeth McCarthy, a Boston-based document expert who had examined the writings on the tissues, reported to NICAP investigator Owen Lake:

It is my opinion that these symbols were made with a common type of pencil of the hard variety. The color and condition match the condition of the writing line and match rather closely that of a No. 4 pencil, such as Mongol 482, Saphir 200 of A. W. Faber or Dixon Oriole 287.

**From Brooksville to Monihey.** "I don't care what anybody says about me," Reeves told a correspondent on April 2. "All I know, I saw the flying saucer and it's [sic] robot pilot."

That story, however, had begun to expand, or so it seemed to some. Several months later he wrote the same individual:

There is a lot more to that story than what I told the news reporters. Something happened back in the woods that no one knew about. . . . [T]he robot, after he took the second flash . . . didn't go over to the saucer. He came over by me, and put his hands on my shoulders three times, tapping me on the shoulders. Something happened there that wasn't to get out, something I knew about. That space craft came back in [sic] twenty nine days later. I knew it was going to come back. There was [sic] three of us that saw it. We got a picture of it, but the picture didn't come out too clear. We had to do some running from under the trees to get out in the opening. The ship came down to about a thousand feet, and about a half mile away. From what I understand, there was a jet chasing it. So I was told by this other party. . . .

When the robot came over to me, he pointed to the sun. Then he pointed to the East, then to the West[;] then he pointed to himself, then to the saucer[;] then he pointed to the sky. As he did this, he made his hand go around in a circle like[;] as he pointed to the ground, he was trying to tell me that the sun would rise and set so many times. That was the number of days that would past [sic] that he would be back again. I understood what he was trying to tell me. I have the paper he made the dots on. After what he done [sic] he put his finger on my lip like and then held his hand out afterwards and closed his hand up like a fist, meaning I shouldn't let any one know that he was coming back here again.

On October 26 the *Tampa Tribune* reported:

Two people confirmed the March 2 saucer sighting saying that they had seen one on that day in the area. On March 31 a Brooksville man and his wife went with Reeves to the woody landing place to await the saucer return and reported that they did see it approaching in the sky from the north and then an Air Force jet approached and the disc-shaped object flipped over on its rim and disappeared. A Pinellas Park resident also reported seeing an unidentified flying object the same afternoon.

Reeves claimed that on October 21 he found footprints and holes at a site about 400 feet from the original landing spot. The footprints, apparently made by two or three individuals, were two inches longer—12 inches as opposed to 10—than those at the first site had been. Reeves allegedly witnessed a landing in the early morning hours of December 4, 1966. A group of UFO enthusiasts led by *Saucer Scoop* editor Joan Whritenour, who arrived a few hours later, found traces and footprints.

To commemorate his UFO experiences, he constructed a 23-foot obelisk, at the top of which he placed a crescent moon and a replica of earth, and displayed it in his front yard. Elsewhere on his property he put a large wooden saucer. He began wearing a jumpsuit and mounting displays of UFO-related materials such as clippings and photographs at local shopping malls.

In 1968 Reeves came forward with a story so bizarre that it shocked his supporters into silence. As he told the tale, at 2 a.m. on August 5 he awoke with a strong urge to go into the woods. He resisted it and fell back to sleep. The feeling continued during the day, and finally at 3 p.m. he headed for the trees. There he met two men, one shorter than the other; both wore spacesuits and carried helmets under their arms. The men quickly overtook him and gently guided him to a waiting flying saucer. There he met a beautiful spacewoman and was flown to the moon.

Before they dropped him off, the space people told him they would come back and take him to their home planet. He would be gone a couple of weeks, so if he disappeared for a time, no one should worry about his whereabouts. True to



their word, the space people returned two months later and took him to their world, which they called Moniheya and which earthlings call Venus. He returned home with a Venusian flag. Where the ship had landed he erected a plaque with this inscription: "The spaceship that took John F. Reeves to planet Moniheya, millions and millions of miles from planet Earth, landed here October 5, 1968."

In 1980 Reeves was forced to sell his property to the state to pay off back taxes, and he moved to a trailer in Brooksville. The state destroyed both house and monuments. Interviewed in the early 1980s, Reeves expressed regret that his ambition to be buried at the foot of the obelisk would never be realized. The stone was to bear these words: "In this tomb lies the body of John F. Reeves, one of the greatest men of our time, the greatest of them all. Outer space traveller to other planets of our galaxy."

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## CASH-LANDRUM CE2

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On the evening of December 29, 1980, near Huffman, Texas, three occupants of a 1980 Oldsmobile Cutlass observed a remarkable sight. Betty Cash, Vickie Landrum, and Vickie's seven-year-old grandson, Colby, on their way home to Dayton, were driving through the southern tip of the east Texas piney woods when they noticed a large light above the trees some distance ahead.

The light was briefly lost to view, but they saw it again when after rounding a curve they found themselves on a straight stretch of two-lane road on Highway FM 1485. This time it was approaching them, floating above the road at less than treetop height and belching flames from its bottom. Cash and the Landrums were only about 130 feet from the object.

Escape was out of the question because the road was narrow and the shoulders soggy. If Betty Cash, who was driving, tried to turn around, she knew, the car would get stuck. There was no other traffic on the desolate highway, so she stepped outside, as did the elder Landrum. But Colby's frantic screams brought her back into the car.

The object, intensely bright and a dull metallic silver in color, was shaped like a huge, upright diamond, with its top and bottom cut off so that they were flat rather than pointed. Small blue lights ringed the center, and periodically over



the next few minutes flames shot out of the bottom, flaring outward to create a cone effect.

All the while the witnesses felt their faces burning. The car was too hot to touch. At one point Vickie Landrum, leaning out the front window, steadied herself by putting her hands on the dashboard, only to find it molded to the shape of her fingers. (The imprints were still there when John F. Schuessler of the Mutual UFO Network [MUFON] subsequently examined the car.) A few minutes later, when Cash tried to get back into the car, the doorhandle burned her fingers.

With a final blast of fire and heat, the UFO ascended slowly into the sky. But just as it was clearing the tree tops, helicopters flew in from all directions. The helicopters and the UFO then were lost to view. The three resumed their journey. They passed along another long curve in the road and in five minutes arrived at the intersection of FM 1485 and FM 2100, where they saw the UFO and the helicopters again. Cash counted 23 helicopters, all clearly visible because the light from the diamond-shaped object was reflecting off them. Many of the aircraft were subsequently identified as large, double-rotor Boeing CH-47 Chinooks, a kind used by the Army and the Marines.

Cash drove on, the diamond and the helicopters still in front of her, until she came to a road that would take them to Dayton. Even then she could see the object in the rearview mirror for the next few minutes. The whole incident lasted a total of 20 minutes.

**Sickness.** Cash dropped the Landrums off at their house and proceeded on to her own. Once home she sat in a chair and waited for the sick feeling to pass, but the headache and nausea would not go away, and large knots formed on her neck and scalp. Soon they became blisters. Meanwhile her skin was reddening, and her eyes swelled. She threw up repeatedly and experienced severe diarrhea.

The Landrums were suffering similar distress, though not quite so intensely. Their skin looked and felt badly sunburned, and their stomachs were upset.

By morning friends feared Cash was near death. She had lapsed into near-unconsciousness. Cash had had heart problems in the past but now was too groggy to identify her cardiologist; her friends were forced to call strange physicians. Those they could reach during this holiday period would not take on an unfamiliar patient with a history of cardiac disorder and, moreover, with a crazy story about having been injured by a UFO.

Knowing nothing else to do, the friends brought Cash to Vickie Landrum's. Landrum tried to feed Cash, but she rejected food and water and grew ever weaker. Finally Landrum persuaded a local druggist to look through his prescription records for the name of Cash's cardiologist. As soon as she had it, Landrum phoned and was instructed to take Cash to the Parkway Hospital emergency room.



Betty Cash was taken into the hospital on January 3, 1981. She could not walk and had lost large patches of skin and clumps of hair. She was released after 12 days, though her condition was not much better, and she later returned to the hospital for another 15 days. The Landrums improved slightly, though the sores on their skin and the damage to their eyes persisted. Vickie suffered periodic sickness for the next few years, and her eyesight never entirely recovered. Colby had problems with chronic illness, sores, and hair loss.

A radiologist who reviewed the victims' medical records for MUFON concluded, "We have strong evidence that these patients have suffered damage secondary to ionizing radiation. It is also possible that there was an infrared or ultraviolet component as well."

**Investigation.** Ufologists learned of the case when the witnesses reported it to a NASA representative in Houston. He suggested they talk with John Schuessler, an aerospace engineer and NASA supervisor with a longstanding interest in UFOs. Schuessler and some MUFON colleagues then interviewed other witnesses, some of whom had seen the UFO and the helicopters for as long as an hour and a half. They also sought the source of the helicopters. The Fund for UFO Research commissioned Allan Hendry, one of ufology's most skilled investigators, to find out where the aircraft had come from. No airport, civilian or military, would own up to knowledge of the helicopters.

Cash and Landrum began a long, frustrating campaign to get answers from government agencies. Eventually their senators, John Tower and Lloyd Bentsen, talked with representatives of the Department of Defense. They urged Cash and

CASH-  
LANDRUM  
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Artist Michael Buhler's depiction of the Cash-Landrum encounter in Huffman, Texas, in December 1980. (Fortean Picture Library)



Landrum to take their complaints to the Judge Advocate Claims Officer at Bergstrom Air Force Base in Austin.

In August 1981 they met with Air Force lawyers at Bergstrom. They were told that if they could find a lawyer willing to represent them, they should file a claim with the U.S. government for compensation for their injuries. The case worked its way through military and federal courts over the next few years, but the witnesses and their attorney could not prove that either the diamond-shaped object or the helicopters were official property. On August 21, 1986, the U.S. District Court judge dismissed the case.

The only known official investigation of any significance was conducted by Lt. Col. George Sarran, whom the Department of the Army Inspector General (DAIG) directed to look into the case in 1982. Sarran concluded:

Ms. Landrum and Ms. Cash were credible. . . . [T]he policeman and his wife [who had reported seeing 12 Chinook helicopters in the Huffman area on the night of the incident] were also credible witnesses. There was no perception that anyone was trying to exaggerate the truth. All interviewees were extremely cooperative and eager to be helpful in any manner. Through the course of inquiry the DAIG investigator tried to concentrate on any reason or anyone or any organization which might have been flying helicopters that particular evening in that general area. There was no evidence presented that would indicate that Army, National Guard, or Army Reserve helicopters were involved.

Meanwhile, according to Schuessler,

Betty Cash has been hospitalized at least 25 times, [and] has had two operations for cancer (after having shown no previous signs of it). She has had blood problems [and] trouble with her eyesight. Her hair has regrown, though in a different texture, but she is still very weak and has to spend a good deal of time in bed.

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## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY AND UFOS.

→ See Robertson Panel.

## CHILES-WHITTED SIGHTING

CHILES-  
WHITTED  
SIGHTING

One of the classic incidents in the early history of the UFO era took place at 2:45 a.m. on July 24, 1948. The principal witnesses, Capt. Clarence S. Chiles and his co-pilot John B. Whitted, were flying an Eastern Airlines DC-3 at 5000 feet on a clear night. A bright full moon illuminated the sky and the ground.

Twenty miles southwest of Montgomery, Alabama, the pilots saw, to their right and just above them, something moving rapidly in their direction. Torpedo-shaped, wingless, and about 100 feet long, it appeared to be "powered by some jet or other type of power shooting flame from the rear some 50 feet," Chiles reported. "There were two rows of windows, which indicated an upper and lower deck, from inside these windows a very bright light was glowing. Underneath the ship there was a blue glow of light."

"The fuselage appeared to be about three times the circumference of a B-29 fuselage," Chiles told investigators from the Air Force's **Project Sign**. "The windows were very large and seemed square. . . . I estimate that we watched the object at least five seconds and not more than 10 seconds. We heard no noise nor did we feel any turbulence from the object. It seemed to be at about 5500 feet." The light it cast, both from the windows and from the flame behind it, nearly blinded them for a few moments.

The object shot past them to their right. It was half a mile away and moving, the pilots guessed, at something like 700 mph. "After it passed, it pulled up into some light broken clouds [at 6000 feet altitude] and was lost from view," Chiles related.

Though nearly all the passengers were sleeping, one who was awake and happened to be looking out a window on the right side caught a glimpse of the passing UFO. Clarence L. McKelvie of Columbus, Ohio, "suddenly saw this strange, eerie streak. . . . It was very intense, not like lightning or anything I had ever seen . . . . I could not get my eyes adjusted to it before it was gone."

The pilots landed in Atlanta at 3:49 a.m. and were taken to radio station WCON for an interview. Newspaper reporter William Key also spoke with Chiles and Whitted, who rejected the suggestion that they had seen a meteor. What they had just seen "was a man-made thing," they insisted.

The Pentagon at first claimed that the two had observed a weather balloon, but this unlikely explanation was quickly withdrawn. An Air Force spokesman in Washington conceded the obvious when he remarked that "this country has no plane resembling a double-decked, jet-propelled, wingless transport shooting a 40-foot flame out of its back end."



Soon the Air Force learned that the same or a similar object had been observed from the ground one hour earlier by a grounds-maintenance crewman at Robins Air Force Base in Georgia. At 1:40 or 1:45 a.m. Walter Massey saw a "stream of fire" coming out of the north. "As it got overhead," he said, "it was a fairly clear outline and appeared to be a cylindrical-shaped object, with a long stream of fire coming out of the tail end. . . . I noticed a faint glow on the belly of the wingless object—a phosphorescent glow." He was sure it was not a meteor: "[A] shooting star falls perpendicular. This object was on a straight and level plane. When it disappeared, it disappeared from sight due to distance, [rather] than drop. . . . [I]t looked like it was about the size of a B-29. It might have been a little larger, in circumference. It was too large for a jet. It seemed to be [of] a dark color and constructed of an unknown metallic type material."

Investigators also contemplated a report from The Hague, Netherlands, from July 20. Through broken clouds high above, witnesses had seen a fast-moving rocket-shaped object with two rows of windows along its sides.

Asked for his assessment, astronomer and Sign consultant **J. Allen Hynek** remarked that "no astronomical explanation" was possible "if we accept the report at face value." Nonetheless the "sheer improbability of the facts as stated . . . makes it necessary to see whether any other explanation, even though far-fetched, can be considered." Perhaps Massey was mistaken; perhaps he had made his sighting of the object at the same time as Chiles and Whitted; so "the object must have been an extraordinary meteor" whose train produced the "subjective impression of a ship with lighted windows."

But other Sign investigators disagreed. Capt. Robert Sneider considered the wingless rocket shape aerodynamically feasible and devoted a page of his report to a discussion of the engineering aspects. "That this development," he wrote, "is possibly of foreign origin would seem to be a logical premise."

By "foreign origin" Sneider did not mean from another nation. As **Project Blue Book** head **Edward J. Ruppelt** would write, "According to the old timers at ATIC [Air Technical Intelligence Center], this report shook them worse than the **Mantell Incident**." To Sign personnel the Chiles-Whitted case proved what their investigations had already led them to suspect: UFOs were extraterrestrial spacecraft. A few days later they prepared an "**Estimate of the Situation**" stating this conclusion. The document, whose very existence the Air Force denied for years, was eventually rejected by Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg, Air Force Chief of Staff, and all copies were ordered to be burned.

Though the Chiles-Whitted case was listed as an "unknown" for a time, as public Air Force attitudes hardened into insistence that all reports were explainable, Hynek's self-described "far-fetched" fireball explanation became the official solution. In the 1960s physicist **James E. McDonald** reviewed the Air Force files and interviewed the two major witnesses separately. He wrote:

Both pilots reiterated to me, quite recently, that each saw *square* ports or windows along the side of the fuselage-shaped object from the rear of which a cherry-red wake emerged, extending back 50-100 feet aft of the object. To term this a "meteor" is not even *qualitatively* reasonable. One can reject the testimony; but reason forbids calling the object a meteor.

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## CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE FIRST KIND

In *The UFO Experience* (1972) astronomer and former **Project Blue Book** consultant **J. Allen Hynek** proposed a classification system for UFO reports. He included in it a "close encounter" category that he divided into three parts. Close encounters of the first kind, or CE1s, were reports in which "objects or very brilliant lights" appeared "less than 500 feet away" from witnesses; in such cases, moreover, the UFOs did not physically affect their environment (as in **close encounters of the second kind**) or carry animate beings or occupants (**close encounters of the third kind**). Virtually all students of the UFO phenomenon honor Hynek's system.

Close encounters are usually regarded as especially evidential because the nearer the witness is to the sighting stimulus, the less likely he or she is to be mistaken about its nature. One problem, however, is that witnesses may be mistaken



about how close they are to what they are seeing. In that case an advertising plane that may be several hundred feet away—its engines too distant to be heard—can be “seen” as a silent structure a few dozen feet away in the night sky. The best CE1s, however, are genuinely puzzling and hard to dismiss or explain away in conventional terms. Some examples:

**A stop at Willoughby.** One cloudy, dark evening in late July or early August 1955, a Willoughby, Ohio, man, W. M. Sheneman, pulled into his driveway, got out of his car, and walked across the road to check his mailbox. He had just opened it when, as he would tell Blue Book investigators,

I saw a red light about 1,000 or 800 feet away, coming at me at a right angle. I could see the outline of the thing and only one big red light could be seen. The light, when I first saw it, looked about the size of a basketball. It was so big it looked like a transport plane but I could hear no motors.

The second or two I stood there, it flashed through my mind that this big plane was going to crash. Then all at once, the ground was illuminated with two brilliant lights in a very large pattern. These lights were in a vertical beam or directly toward the ground. Then I got scared. I turned and ran back across the road and past my car. I did not stop to get in it. I ran toward the house, because if this was a big plane, it would crash right in our front yard. When I got to the back of the house, my wife was at the back door and yelled, “Shall I turn on the outside lights?”

By this time the thing was right over me. As I looked up at it, I realized this was no airplane or anything I had ever seen before. I yelled back at my wife, “Hell no, don’t turn on the lights—maybe it will miss.” I was then at the back of the house and my wife and children were all there crying, “What is it, Daddy, what is it?” This thing was now over the garage about 50 to 100 feet off the ground—hovering there—not moving. I could hear no motor sound, but it had a sound like a big fan running. The ground lights were now off. The only lights I could see now were a big red light in the front and a big green light on the rear. By a big light I mean a light at least 12 inches across. Then all of the lights went off and the thing moved away, southeasterly toward the woods. It moved with lightning speed and then stopped over the woods. At this time, we could make out the outline of a dome affair on top. It was lit up with a lot of little tiny lights inside—we could see nothing else inside. It stayed there at that place about five minutes and then moved slowly away over the woods. . . .

[I]t was about 80 to 100 feet in diameter and was flat on the bottom. It was almost round except at the rear of it. The rear was something like a pear shape. The dome was long and flat—I do not know what it was.

His wife provided her own account:

I was waiting for my husband to come home from work. I was standing at the front door at about 8:45 p.m., watching for the car. My husband, as usual, stopped at the end of the drive and went across for the mail. I saw the object across the road approximately 50 feet in the air. . . . It being dark, you could not make out the size, only from the outline of the lights. There was a red light in front and as it got over the field, it seemed to throw two spotlights or landing lights down to the ground. With that, my husband ran from the road to the house, leaving the station wagon by the road, thinking it was a plane and that it was going to hit the house.

I met him at the back door yelling, "Turn the outside lights on before it hits the house." He yelled back, "Turn them off and maybe it will miss." Then looking to the left from our step, there it was hovering in the air. Then we knew it wasn't an airplane as we could see from the lights. It had a red light in front and a green one in back and seemed to be outlined by small white fluorescent lights across the top. It made a sound like a fan but for the thing's size, it seemed like such a little noise. It hovered at the one spot to the left of the house for about a half minute. Then it swerved and started over the wooded area back to the left of the house. It hovered over the edge of the woods approximately five minutes. Then it seemed to drift away.

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**A disc in Connecticut.** An adult counselor and 13 teenaged boys were resting from an afternoon hike in the woods of Camp Delaware near Winsted, Connecticut, when they heard a high-pitched whine. They looked up to see, through an open clearing in the trees, an object that looked like a silvery, flat-bottomed saucer 15 to 25 feet in diameter. A purple haze surrounded the structure, and on top of it there was a red glow that some took to be a dome.

The UFO was hovering at a steep angle and stayed in place for 15 to 25 seconds before the whining sound returned, heralding the object's rapid departure. The counselor said it ascended and was lost to sight within a second or two. Its motion was so quick that other witnesses thought it had not moved, just vanished instantaneously. The incident took place at 3:45 p.m. on July 28, 1976.

**A triangle in Wisconsin.** On October 14, 1986, a couple driving north on Highway 45 near Bristol, Wisconsin, around 11 p.m. saw red and white lights flickering on the road ahead. Fearing they had come upon a particularly bad car accident, they drove cautiously in the expectation of encountering police and rescue vehicles. Instead they encountered something they had not even imagined: an enormous triangular-shaped object hovering just above the pavement. The lights ran along its outer edges.



The couple pulled to the side of the road and parked almost directly beneath the object, 30 feet above them. "It was the size of a two-story house and spanned the width of the road," the husband told a Center for UFO Studies investigator. The two stepped out and stared upward, more fascinated than frightened. "It was so low that if we would have stood on the roof of the car," they said, "we could almost have touched it." On the lower surface they could make out a grid understructure. The witnesses did not doubt that this was a machine of some unknown kind.

Two minutes later the UFO drifted slowly toward the southeast and vanished from sight.

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## CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE SECOND KIND

**J** Allen Hynek defined a close encounter of the second kind (CE2) as a UFO sighting in which a "physical effect on either animate or inanimate matter is manifested." A particularly dramatic example of such an incident took place decades before words such as UFO and CE2 existed. According to *Scientific American*, something extraordinary and frightening happened in Venezuela on the "rainy and tempestuous" night of October 24, 1886:

... [A] family of nine persons, sleeping in a hut a few leagues from Maracaibo, were awakened by a loud humming noise and a vivid, dazzling light, which brilliantly illuminated the interior of the house.

The occupants, completely terror stricken, and believing, as they relate, that the end of the world had come, threw themselves on their knees and commenced to pray, but their devotions were almost immediately interrupted by violent vomitings, and extensive swellings commenced

to appear in the upper part of their bodies, this being particularly noticeable about the face and lips.

It is to be noted that the brilliant light was not accompanied by a sensation of heat, although there was a smoky appearance and a peculiar smell.

The next morning the swellings had subsided, leaving upon the face and body large black blotches. No special pain was felt until the ninth day, when the skin peeled off, and these blotches were transformed into virulent raw sores.

The hair of the head fell off upon the side which happened to be underneath when the phenomenon occurred, the same side of the body being, in all nine cases, the more seriously injured.

The remarkable part of the occurrence is that the house was uninjured, all doors and windows being closed at the time.

No trace of lightning could afterward be observed in any part of the building, and all the sufferers unite in saying that there was no detonation, but only the loud humming already mentioned.

Another curious attendant circumstance is that the trees around the house showed no signs of injury until the ninth day, when they suddenly withered, almost simultaneously with the development of the sores upon the bodies of the occupants of the house.

This is perhaps a mere coincidence, but it is remarkable that the same lapse of time should be observed in both animal and vegetable organisms.

I have visited the sufferers, who are now in one of the hospitals of this city; and although their appearance is truly horrible, yet it is hoped that in no case will the injuries prove fatal.

Warner Cowgill, who wrote this piece, was an official associated with the U.S. Consulate in Maracaibo.

**CE2s and frustrated science.** By their nature CE2s ought to be the most important of all UFO cases. Landing-trace incidents in particular ought to have the potential to settle the issue of whether UFOs exist as extraordinarily anomalous phenomena. At least in theory, they take UFO experiences out of the realm of anecdotal testimony and into the laboratory, where hard evidence can be scrutinized and documented.

Unfortunately, the resistance to UFOs by many scientists ensures that the kind of investigation CE2s require is seldom accomplished. A properly conducted inquiry requires scientifically trained investigators who have access to the necessary field instruments. It also must have laboratories and personnel willing and able



to analyze samples or other relevant materials. Since all of this is expensive, the investigation must also be well funded.

In practice such circumstances are hardly ever obtained. Few scientists actively investigate UFO reports, and nearly all those who do work in a private capacity, on their own time. They usually finance their research with their own money or with limited funds provided by UFO organizations, themselves operating on shoestring budgets. In most cases, if a laboratory gets involved at all, it is because one of its employees is curious enough to study the material in his or her spare time, usually at night or on weekends when the facility is closed. Often the scientist will ask that neither his or her name nor the laboratory's be publicized. Even then, because he is essentially working alone, his analysis will be confined to what he can determine from the limited perspective of his specific expertise. A full analysis would have the sample subjected to a range of tests by scientists and technicians possessing a variety of specialized knowledge.

Thus the frequently expressed allegation that no good physical evidence for UFOs exists becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. A great deal of potential evidence can be found in CE2 reports (of which it is safe to say most critics have never heard), but because—so elite opinion has it—UFOs are heretical phenomena fit only for ridicule and dismissal, the ordinary processes of scientific inquiry are unavailable to them. The equation runs something like this: if UFOs existed, there would be physical evidence of them; since they don't exist, there can be no physical evidence. Thus the very notion of UFO physical evidence is illegitimate, and not many scientists are willing to tie their reputations and careers to the study of illegitimate notions.

Even the fullest investigation of a single case to date had to be folded when funding to pursue one crucial aspect—the effect of electromagnetic waves on plant and molecular systems—did not materialize. Nonetheless, the **Trans-en-Provence CE2** had the good fortune of being investigated by an agency, Groupe d'Études des Phénomènes Aérospatiaux Non Identifiés (GEPAN), of the French government. After an elderly man reported seeing a disc-shaped object land near his garden on January 8, 1981, the Gendarmerie and GEPAN launched an extensive inquiry. Botanical samples were taken to the National Institute for Research in Agronomy and subjected to tests and analyses. The results, released in GEPAN's *Technical Note 16* (1983) and reported in 66 pages of small print, indicated that something extraordinary, apparently technological, had interacted with the soil and plants, with measurable but not explainable effects possibly caused by an "electromagnetic field."

Samples from a 1971 Kansas landing-trace case, the **Delphos CE2**, were examined by scientists in a number of laboratories in the United States and England. Some of the samples seemed sufficiently unusual to frustrate **hoax** and other theories that posited conventional causes. Beyond that little more could be said. As Michael D. Swords has remarked:

What the relationships of these materials may have been to one another is unknown. The chemistry was never pursued far enough to describe any of these structures sufficiently. Consequently this becomes another in a long series of missed opportunities to discover something new in nature, because of the lack of social willingness or support by the scientific community to push this research to a conclusion.

**CE2 effects.** Not all CE2s by any means leave lasting physical evidence. In many CE2s UFOs are associated with temporary effects on vehicles, aircraft, and machines. Many such cases are recorded in the literature. Other cases, like the Venezuelan incident above, involve physiological effects.

Some representative CE2s follow:

**Parted waters.** After bathing in the sea near Lomé, in the West African nation of Togo late on the evening of March 28, 1974, French vacationer A. W. and a native lady friend lay relaxing on a sloping beach underneath coconut palms. Then a high-pitched whine shattered the silence of the calm, starry night, and the couple observed an unlighted cylindrical object just above the water. It headed toward them on a level flight path until it got to within 500 feet of them. It stopped, and within moments a tidal wave had washed over the two witnesses.

A. W. grabbed his friend with one arm and with the other held on to the nearest tree. Wave after wave of water crashed against them. Meantime the UFO was shooting powerful beams of light at them. In the illumination A. W., who was wearing slightly tinted glasses, could see the waters parted in a deep trough, far deeper than a conventional helicopter could produce. It looked as if something had scraped off a section of the sea surface and dropped it on the witnesses, who in the meantime felt as if they were paralyzed and unable to swim away. After 20 minutes the UFO turned off its lights and flew off over the sea. The water surface returned to normal.

The couple now were able to move off and return to their hotel. Over the next few days A. W. felt strangely exhausted and fainted on several occasions. He also experienced a ringing in his ears.

**Paralysis.** Returning from a sight-seeing excursion through the countryside, a Leominster, Massachusetts, couple, Mr. and Mrs. William L. Wallace, passed through a dense fog near St. Leo's Cemetery not far from their home. There was no other fog on this otherwise clear night (it was 1:05 a.m., March 8, 1967). While in the fog, Wallace noticed a bright glow to his left. He wondered if it was a fire; if that was the case, the fog would really be smoke. To make sure, he turned his car around and headed back for a better look.

The glow turned out to be from a light hovering 400 to 500 feet above the cemetery. Intrigued, Wallace placed his car in neutral gear, yanked the emergency brake, and stepped outside. As he pointed toward the light, something pulled his



arm back and dropped it on the roof of the car, which at that moment stalled. The vehicle's electrical system went out at the same time.

"I was unable to move," Wallace told investigator Raymond E. Fowler. "My wife was in panic. My mind was not at all affected. [I] just could not move. [It] felt like shock or numbness." His wife recalled, "I was yelling for Bill to get back into the car, but he did not move from where he was standing. I then slid across the seat and reached for him." Even as she pulled hard on his jacket, he remained immobile for more than half a minute.

As the lights and radio suddenly resumed functioning, the UFO rocked back and forth, then ascended with a humming sound and quickly disappeared. Now able to move, Wallace leaped into the car and turned the ignition key. To his immense relief the car started normally. The couple resumed their homeward journey, but Wallace felt oddly "slow and sluggish." Because of his impaired reflexes, he collided with the garage door as he pulled into his driveway.

**Damaged trees.** On June 28, 1973, at around 12:30 a.m., Venea Richards, 16, went to the refrigerator of the mobile home she occupied just outside Columbia, Missouri, with her father and three-year-old brother. As she was retrieving a baby bottle, she heard a loud "thrashing" sound apparently emanating from the trees 80 feet to the north. She called her father, James Richards, an animal-care technician at the University of Missouri, who looked out the window to see two beams of silver-white light about 50 feet in the distance, between the trees and a nearby fence. They were four feet wide at the top, two feet at the ground, and five feet apart. Then they abruptly faded, revealing a bright oval shape above the spot where they had been. The implication was that the beams had come from this object.

The UFO was so bright that it was hard to stare at for long, but the witnesses were able to estimate that the object was 12 to 15 feet in diameter and hovering at very low altitude. The trees (which were blowing as if from a mighty wind, though the evening was still) and surrounding area were "lit up bright as day." One tree just to the west-northwest of the object appeared as if something were tugging it toward the ground.

The thrashing sound ceased. Soon a loud crack sounded, and the tugging motion on the tree stopped as well. Richards noticed at this point that his dogs were not barking at the lights, despite their custom of barking at every other unfamiliar presence in the night. He loaded several guns and resumed his observing. Now he could see that the UFO, now some 50 feet from them, was of an aluminum color, "real, real bright at the center, dull white at the edges."

After several minutes the object headed northward, moving below the tree-tops and passing through a small open area until, on reaching the end of the field, it ascended slightly and hovered 200 feet from the trailer. It moved westward a short distance, then returned to the position it had just held. It was a little dim-

mer at this stage, enough so that now a band of blue light and an orange glow around the edges could be seen.

Richards dialed directory assistance and spoke with an operator, asking her to notify the police because he was witnessing a strange object. In an excited, frightened voice he described it to her, and she promised to do what she could. She or another operator would call back shortly. The other operator who attempted a return call a minute or two later got a dead line. After a fifth try she got through.

To the witnesses' distress the object headed back toward the trailer before stopping at the spot where they had first observed it. After a while it flew smoothly and silently through the trees, hovered for a short time, then did something bizarre and unexpected: it shrank until it disappeared.

Visiting the site on the morning of July 9, ufologist Ted Phillips found the following:

The imprints and damage to trees is [sic] located in an area of scattered trees north of the trailer. . . . A fence is 25 feet from the window and the first imprint was found some 50.5 feet beyond the fence. This seemed to be a series of imprints rather than just one. The imprints at this point numbered 4[;] they were 0.5 feet by 0.4 feet with a depth of 0.2 to 0.3 feet. This first set of imprints are [sic] 9.5 feet from a large broken tree limb. This limb is 0.4 feet in diameter and was still attached to the tree trunk. It appeared to have been twisted slightly and pulled toward the ground. The limb was broken at a point 16.5 feet above the ground. Two smaller limbs, each 0.1 feet in diameter, located on the larger limb, were broken off. A small limb 17.0 feet above the ground[,] extending from the tree trunk at the point of the break, shows signs of being rubbed. All the breaks are fresh. Leaves in this area around the broken limbs are dying. There are signs of scorching on these leaves. . . .

To the north of the first imprint (along the alleged flight path) we found a complex series of imprints. . . . Bob Gassaway, a reporter with the *Columbia Tribune*, visited the site on the day of the sighting. He told me that he tried to make a heel mark by one of the imprints and although he weighs over 300 pounds, he could insert his heel to a depth of only 1/2 inch. As the imprints are generally 0.5 by 0.4 feet with a depth of 0.3 feet, we must assume a weight on each imprint of well over 300 pounds. One other limb . . . had dead leaves. There were no marks of any kind in the field. The area was checked for radiation on June 28th[;] none was detected.

**Patterns in vehicle-interference data.** Among the most commonly reported CE2s are vehicle-interference cases. In *UFO Reports Involving Vehicle Interference* (1981), a comprehensive catalogue and analysis published by the Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS), Mark Rodeghier (who today is scientific director of the organization) col-



lected 441 cases, beginning with a May 19, 1909, case in Wroxham, Norfolk, England, when a motorcyclist observed a glove-shaped light pass overhead. As it did so, the cycle's headlight went out. As soon as the object was out of sight, the headlight came back on.

Rodeghier found that in common with other kinds of close encounters, most vehicle-interference cases "occurred in rural or deserted areas" and in the late-evening or early-morning hours. ("During the period from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.," he wrote, "the chance of experiencing an effect is 131 times less than at 3:00 a.m.") This fact, Rodeghier observed, cast doubt on claims that such effects are caused by thunderstorms, which for meteorological reasons tend to occur late in the afternoon, or by piezoelectric fields, which result from seismic stresses on quartz-bearing granite. "It does not seem plausible that such fields be preferentially formed in the hours between 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m.," he stated.

In 35% of the cases, witnesses estimated that they were within 100 feet of the object, which "allows us to place more confidence in the witness' report of UFO characteristics." One-third of the UFOs were described as discs and estimated to be 10 to 30 feet in diameter. Most cases involved more than one witness (an average of 1.91 per case). These witnesses do not represent any particular class of people beyond those who drive cars, just "a random sample of the available drivers (vehicles) on the road, by time of day and location."

In the end Rodeghier uncovered "35 separate statistically significant correlations." Some were remarkable indeed. One nexus incorporated the presence of a light beam, control of the vehicle, a physiological effect on the witness, and the chasing of the vehicle by the UFO. Another included UFOs that were metallic-appearing, that were shaped like discs, and that land and emit sound. A third nexus focused on "silent, small lights moving in a straight trajectory."

The first two, comprising "very dramatic scenarios which involve large energies, seemingly deliberate acts of control of the vehicle, and metallic *objects* emitting sound, often landing on the ground," do not, Rodeghier concluded, "describe some unknown natural phenomenon."

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## CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND

Printed accounts of what may be characterized, even if only generally, as "UFO occupant" encounters begin to appear in the latter half of the nineteenth century and figure prominently, though not believably, in some 1896 and 1897 American newspaper reports of unidentified "airships." (See **Airship Sightings in the Nineteenth Century** and **UFOs, 1900-1946**.) If there are any reports from sincere witnesses among these, they are lost in the mass of journalistic inventions, jokes, and tall tales from the provinces.

A rare account of a nineteenth-century encounter with a UFO occupant outside the airship context came to light in 1969, when an Australian newspaper reported an incident alleged to have occurred in 1893, in central New South Wales. A farmer supposedly saw a saucer-shaped vehicle land on his property. As he approached it, a man in "strange clothing" stepped out of the craft and aimed something that looked like a "torch" (flashlight) at him. The light hit the witness' hand.



He was knocked to the ground and lost consciousness. When he recovered, the machine and its occupant were gone. For the rest of his life, his hand was paralyzed.

The term “close encounters of the third kind” was coined in 1972 by **J. Allen Hynek**. Hynek defined these as claims “in which the presence of animated creatures is reported” in UFO sightings.

**Humanoids in the young century.** The first recorded CE3 of the twentieth century allegedly occurred in the summer of 1901 in Bournbrook, England. In 1978 the witness, by now of course an old man but with still active faculties, related this story:

One evening when he was 10 years old, he was returning home through a path behind his family’s garden when he came upon a box-shaped device with a small, centrally placed turret. The only opening was a door, through which two small men in uniforms, each wearing an odd-looking cap with a wire sticking up at the right and left sides, stepped out. While one stayed by the door, the other walked toward the witness and waved him away. Except for their height (less than four feet) they looked entirely human and Caucasian. They were dressed in what resembled military uniforms but without insignia. The two beings then reentered their ship. A bright flash lit up around it, and then it shot off into the air with a loud “whooshing” sound. Similar entities would be reported in later decades.

Some other representative early CE3s:

In 1909, during a spate of airship sightings in New Zealand, Great Britain, and the northeastern United States, some witnesses reported seeing figures in passing craft. In one of the more interesting of these cases, a Waipawa, New Zealand, man on horseback spotted a large torpedo-shaped structure in the sky and saw three persons inside it. One shouted at him in an unknown language, and the craft rose high into the air, circled, and disappeared behind a hill (*Nelson [New Zealand] Evening Mail*, December 6, 1952).

Around eleven o’clock one early July day in 1919, a brother and sister who lived on a farm in the Webster City, Iowa, area suddenly “heard a chirping—like sparrows feeding,” the sister would testify. She went on:

We turned and saw a brown green object beneath the tree near the creek about 75 feet from us. We ran toward it before noticing a figure in green-brown[; he was] stern looking [and] standing in the door which had been lowered to the ground and had steps. He startled us by making strange guttural [sic] sounds—then we noticed a shorter figure in the same clothes running toward the stream leading to the pond. He went very fast [and] dipped up some water in what looked like a tin can about the size of a small soup can. He got the water despite the protests of the man in the door. The one with the can was smaller than the one in the door. The big one hustled the little one into the vehicle and the door slammed shut. . . . It made a metallic sound when it closed. . . . The vehicle rose straight up very fast. The top of the vehi-

cle hit the tree limbs and broke a few small branches off—all this without a sound of a motor. It raised [sic] straight up, then went sidewise and over the hill with it's [sic] three legs still down, no lights, no sound. We followed up the hill, but it soon left us and was out of sight. We went back to where it landed. The soil in a wide area where they had landed was covered with round spots that resembled cane marks.

**The 1920s and 1930s.** As the years move closer to 1947, the number of recorded CE3s increases. CE3s themselves may or may not have been growing in number. It is certain, however, that there were a greater number of living witnesses able to tell their stories now that, in the post-Arnold period, such things as UFOs and alien beings were recognized as at least hypothetically real. Some representative stories from the two middle decades of the first half-century follow:

Marseilles, France, summer 1921: As he played among some hills, an eight-year-old boy was suddenly accosted by two tall, slender men wearing “pliable helmets” and dragged into an “oddly shaped tank.” The witness recalled 33 years later that “after a while an opening appeared in the ceiling of the cabin, and in a few seconds I found myself on the ground. However, I had to walk most of the afternoon until I found myself near the road I had left five minutes before” (letter to *Paris-Match*, October 23-30, 1954).

Tobin Lake, Saskatchewan, summer 1933: For weeks reports of strange lights in the sky or near the ground circulated through this remote northwestern region of one of Canada's prairie provinces. Curious about these reports, two young men and a woman drove to the site from the village of Nipawin. On their way they saw a glow near the horizon and trekked a quarter of a mile into the woods. From their vantage point they could see a large oval-shaped craft resting on legs. From an open central doorway a bright orange glow emanated and a ladderlike stairway extended, and a dozen figures moved up and down the steps. Dressed in silver suits or uniforms, wearing helmets or ski caps, and slightly shorter than normal men, they appeared to be repairing the craft. The sighting lasted for half an hour, and the UFO and occupants were still there when the observers left for their pickup truck in what proved an unsuccessful effort to get closer. Two nights later they returned and found imprints and burn marks, which they photographed. Subsequently two of them wrote a manuscript and submitted it to several Canadian magazines, which refused to publish what they deemed an outlandish fiction. By the 1970s, when ufologist John Brent Musgrave interviewed the three, the photographs were long lost.

**Through 1946.** Near Newbiggen-on-Sea, Northumberland, England, late summer 1942: In October 1967 a series of strange events, including bedroom hallucinations and some apparent UFO sightings, led Albert Lancashire to reflect on a bizarre experience from 25 years earlier. Lancashire contacted British ufologists, who later interviewed him and concluded he was sincere and sane. Lancashire claimed that while standing guard at a radar station he saw a cloud-enshrouded light approach-



ing from the sea. As the object descended, he was drawn up into it by a beam. Pygmy-sized men then grabbed him and carried him into the craft, where he saw other figures of normal human height, including an apparent captain with dark hair and goggles. Lancashire was made to lie down on a couch or table. As he lay there, he saw one of the human-sized figures, wearing what looked like a surgeon's cap and thick goggles, leaning over another table. Lancashire had only vague memories of what happened next, but he thought a "medical examination" had been performed. The next thing he knew, he was back at his sentry post.

Rochester, Pennsylvania, October 1944: Late at night members of a family who lived in an isolated area on the outskirts of town were awakened by a loud noise and a flash of light. The husband/father went to the door, where he saw a figure, approximately four and a half feet tall, in a brown robe. Fifteen feet to the figure's left were five individuals of comparable height; these were dressed in luminous brown metallic suits. All of them were illuminated by a light around them. The witness recalled, "Their heads seemed quite large. Their arms were long with long thin fingers. [There was] a slit for a mouth." Three of the figures, including the robed one (who "seemed to be the leader"), came into the house. Then the main witness accompanied them to a "craft" landed near the house. He remembered nothing else until morning. Even then his recall of what had happened was hazy. He thought he had dreamed the incident. Nonetheless, a round, burned circle, 20 feet from the house and 25 feet in diameter, attested to the reality of strange events the previous night. Even so, family members did not discuss the incident until many years later.

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, late August 1946: Margaret Sprankle, a young civilian employee of Tinker Air Force Base, was returning from work and just about to enter her house when she happened to glance to the northwest and there see, at 100 yards' distance, a large metallic, lens-shaped structure about 75 feet in diameter. On the lower right-hand side were 12 to 14 square windows; in each, visible from the shoulders up, was a figure set against a dark background. "The heads were quite round, either rather bald or wearing helmets," she told investigators years later. She thought they were looking at her, but because the distance obscured details, she was not certain of this. The UFO rotated 90 degrees on its vertical axis, and now Sprankle could see it edge on. At that point the object silently headed northwest and disappeared from view in seconds.

**1947 and after.** Reports of UFO occupants would come into public view only gradually after 1947, and even for the earliest ufologists, the existence, appearance, and nature of beings inside flying discs were questions that could be addressed only speculatively. Yet several occupant reports got press coverage following the Kenneth **Arnold sighting** of June 24.

One occurred on the afternoon of the same day. Four decades later Bill Schuening, an Oregon farmer, was sticking by an experience he had first spoken of in June 1947. Schuening was driving his pickup truck on a rural road 25 miles north

of Pendleton when he heard a humming sound. Coming over a rise, he glanced out over a field and was shocked to see a shiny, silvery sphere hovering five or six feet above the ground. Even more startling was the sight of “two little guys in green suits with white helmets standing right underneath it.” They were about three feet high. A few seconds later “they were gone. How they got in [the craft] I’ll never know. Suddenly they were just gone.” The UFO headed east toward the Walla Walla River, made a circle, and flew toward the mountains.

A complete listing of CE3s from the early UFO era would fill a book. A sense of what these reports involved, however, can be gleaned from a review of the patterns and from summaries of representative cases. Where patterns are concerned, it should be stated at the outset that reports in which humanoids and humanlike entities figure dominate the accounts, as is apparent already from the pre-1947 ones reviewed above. But within the humanoid/human reports the inquirer can find both remarkable variety and striking uniformity.

**Humans and near-humans.** Schenectady, New York, July 1952: While in a car one afternoon, a man saw an oblong object hovering nearby. “Then a gondola seemed to lower from the object,” he related, and what looked like a “bunch of Navy officers in Navy white hats” rushed to the windows. All were wearing huge dark glasses. The “gondola” was withdrawn into the ship, and three smaller objects appeared and entered through the bottom. Norco, California, spring 1954: Going outside to investigate the source of a metallic droning sound, a mother and her daughter saw an object like a rowboat with a transparent dome, 20 feet long and 10 feet wide, pass slowly overhead, then stop and hover over a nearby tree. Inside the dome five helmeted men sat staring at the witnesses. Their “rather long faces” were olive-colored, and their eyes and hair were dark. After a minute the droning sound resumed, and the object took off at a slow speed. The UFO then circled the house and departed. Near Linha Bela Vista, Brazil, December 9, 1954: A farmer busy hoeing heard a sewing-machine sound and looked up to see a cream-colored object “shaped like a tropical helmet” hovering just above the ground. One man stood inside it; another was examining a fence, and a third was near the farmer, who dropped his hoe. The being smiled, picked it up, and handed it back to him. The three figures had pale skin, slanted eyes, and long blond hair. All wore light brown coveralls. They plucked some plants, reentered their ship, and shot off at great speed. The witness, who had never heard of UFOs, thought the men were American pilots. Milford, Pennsylvania, May 1957: At dawn a farm woman about to enter her barn heard a whirring sound and observed a “flat, bowl-shaped object with a broad rim.” As it hovered 50 feet away, its sole occupant, a helmeted man with a long, olive-colored face and a shiny, light gray suit, gazed at her with a “quizzical” expression. He was sitting on the far rim, with his feet in the bowl. Inside the open vehicle levers could be seen. After a minute the craft departed. Allen Park, Michigan, October 1957: At 10 p.m. two women in a car spotted a reddish orange disc, 30 feet in diameter, just above the treetops. They pursued it for a block or two before it streaked off. One of the witnesses looked through a large window on the UFO’s



lower section and observed two figures dressed in what she thought looked like white Navy uniforms.

**Dwarfs in diving suits.** Quarouble, France, September 10, 1954: Hearing his dog barking, the witness went outside and sighted a dark mass on a railroad track. He heard footsteps and turned on his flashlight, which revealed two beings, less than three and a half feet tall, wearing "diver's suits." As they headed toward the object on the track, a light from it blinded and paralyzed the man. When the beam was turned off, the witness ran toward the UFO, which rose and flew away. Five imprints were found on the tracks. Investigators thought it would have taken a 30-ton object to make the marks. Cenon, France, September 17, 1954: A motorcyclist was paralyzed after feeling something like an electric shock. From a nine-foot-long vessel emerged a little man in a diving suit. The being touched the witness on the shoulder, muttered something incomprehensible, and returned to the ship. As it flew away, the paralysis left. During the fall of 1954 numerous comparable reports were made in the course of a great UFO wave in France. Near Isola, Italy, November 11, 1954: Three dwarfs wearing metallic "diving suits" came out of a cigar-shaped vessel and addressed one another in a language the witness, a farmer, did not understand. Because they were clearly interested in rabbits he kept in a cage, the witness thought they were plotting to steal them. He aimed a gun at them and pulled the trigger, to no avail. Suddenly feeling weak, he dropped the weapon. The beings took his rabbits and left in their craft.

**Human dwarfs.** Conashaugh, Pennsylvania, December 17, 1956: A woman went outside with a flashlight and encountered two little men, one stocky and three feet tall, the other slender and three and a half feet tall. Both were wearing silvery, tight-fitting suits with helmets. The beings were humanlike and of fair complexion. They stood motionless as the witness focused the flashlight beam on them for three minutes, but they were gone when she came out again with her husband. Near House, Mississippi, November 7, 1957: A truck driver encountered a large egg-shaped object with one propeller blade located at the top and one at each end. Two men and a woman, dark-haired and four and a half feet tall, stepped outside and spoke to him with a "chattering sound." One tried to shake his hand. They had "pasty white" faces and looked "like no people I have ever seen." The beings returned to their vehicle, which ascended and disappeared in seconds.

**Hairy dwarfs.** Pournoy-la-Chetive, France, October 9, 1954: Three children were roller-skating when a "round shiny machine came down very close to us. Out of it came a kind of man, four feet tall, dressed in a black sack like the cassock M. le Cure wears. His head was hairy, and he had big eyes. He said things to us that we couldn't understand, and we ran away. When we stopped and looked back, the machine was going up into the sky very fast." Petare, Venezuela, November 28, 1954: At 2 a.m. two men in a truck encountered a glowing spherical object, eight to 10 feet in diameter, hovering just above the ground and blocking the road. When they got out of the truck, they saw a three-foot-tall being, with claws and glowing eyes, approaching. One of the men picked up the entity, finding it strangely light,

hard, and hairy. The entity pushed the man 15 feet, and the man then tried to stab it, but his knife glanced off its body. Two similar beings came out of the bushes, their hands carrying soil, and the three fled into the sphere and escaped. One witness was left with a deep scratch on his face.

**Gray dwarfs.** Branch Hill, Ohio, May 25, 1955: On his way home from work at 3:30 a.m. a driver saw three figures in his headlights. They were gray-skinned and three and a half feet tall, and of decidedly strange appearance. They had wide mouths without lips and deep wrinkles instead of hair on their heads. Their chests were lop-sided, with big bulges on the right side, and their garments covered only the bottom half of their bodies. The being closest to the witness, who had stepped outside his car to watch, at first was holding a bar or chain above its head. Sparks ran along this object. Then the entity bent over and seemed to tie the device around its ankles. The witness watched for about five minutes before returning to his car to alert the local police chief. Near Stockton, Georgia, July 3, 1955: At 3:30 a.m. a Cincinnati woman driving on a rural highway spotted four objects she first took to be “animals” in her headlights. As she approached them at reduced speed, she saw they were wearing gray-greenish cloaks with slouch hats on their heads. They were huddled together as if digging for something in the middle of the road. One, who held a stick, looked at her as she passed by. Less than four feet tall, he held clawlike hands above his oversized, gray-skinned head. “The eyes,” she testified in a sworn statement, “were big, like saucers. . . . I saw no pupils. . . . The nose was long—real long—and pointed. . . . The mouth seemed small to me. I didn’t notice any lips.” The other three figures paid her no attention, remaining where they were and letting her swerve around to avoid hitting them. Only the figure nearest the car moved, taking a “little step backward.”

**Flying entities.** Chehalis, Washington, January 6, 1948: In the afternoon an elderly woman and a group of children observed a man equipped with long silver wings hovering 20 feet over her barn. He ascended, flying in an upright position, all the while manipulating instruments strapped to his chest. There was no propeller or other obvious source of power. “I know most people don’t believe me,” the woman told a local newspaper, “but I have talked to some people in Chehalis that tell me they saw the man, too.” Near Grassy Butte, Oregon, September 16, 1948: Just before dawn a man saw two “flying persons” in the southern sky at about 200 feet altitude. Their wings, narrowed and rounded at the tips, did not flap, and their legs were unusually short. Moving slowly, they were visible for some minutes.

**Nonhuman entities.** Flatwoods, West Virginia, September 12, 1952: A woman, a 17-year-old man, and six children saw a bright red object apparently land on the far side of a hill. When they went to investigate, they saw a huge monstrous form with glowing eyes, with a head shaped like the “ace of spades.” As it glided toward them, the group fled in terror. Derry, New Hampshire, December 15, 1956: While gathering Christmas greens late one morning, a man turned and saw a two-foot-tall green dwarf standing next to him. The entity had a high forehead, floppy ears, and a face “like a bloodhound” except for its lidless reptilian eyes. The skin hung in folds on



the naked body. After watching the witness for a few minutes, the being “started for me with a kind of screeching sound, and I left there,” the man reported.

**Ufologists’ views.** To conservative ufologists of the early 1950s, CE3s had two strikes against them. One, the first widely publicized little men stories were of bodies found in **crashes and retrievals of UFOs**, and these were proven to be **hoaxes**. Two, the flamboyant early **contactees**, whom many ufologists considered charlatans, claimed repeated meetings with humanlike alien visitors. Thus, for some, any kind of encounter with UFO occupants was suspect, if only by association. To some early UFO writers it had yet to be established that UFOs had even landed, much less unleashed their crews on startled earthlings.

Yet there could be no objection to UFO occupants in principle if one assumed that observers were reporting accurately what they saw: in many cases, structured craftlike objects with apparent “portholes.” Why would an unpiloted vehicle require windows?

Many ufologists were deeply impressed by the multitude of humanoid reports from France and South America in the fall of 1954. Soon some of America’s most sober UFO researchers, including Ted Bloecher, Leonard H. Stringfield, and others, were investigating domestic CE3s, weeding out the hoaxes and documenting the credible sightings. Occupant reports became a regular feature of the *A.P.R.O. Bulletin*, which, owing to its network of contacts in Latin America, was able to provide an international perspective on the growing phenomenon.

**The new era.** In 1964 the **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP) released a thick book, *The UFO Evidence*. The issue of UFO occupants was left to a terse discussion confined to a handful of paragraphs on two of *Evidence’s* concluding pages. NICAP devoted much of the discussion to contactee charlatans, while acknowledging that some witnesses to “landings” in which entities were seen but not communicated with seemed sincere. “Some landings and near-landing cases are more plausible than others,” it acknowledged, then added, “Some may eventually prove to be honest mistakes of some kind.” In any case, under existing circumstances “objective investigation” of such cases was “nearly impossible.”

But all that would change on April 24, 1964, a day of particular significance in UFO history. For one thing, it effectively ended any lingering controversy about whether any occupant reports could be viewed as credible. The incident that occurred at Socorro, New Mexico, in the late afternoon of that day puzzled even **Project Blue Book** investigators, ordinarily adept at finding explanations even when, in the judgment of others, none existed. Lonnie Zamora’s brief sighting of an egg-shaped structure and two small figures amounted to compelling evidence for the existence of piloted UFOs of unknown origin, when one took into consideration not only Zamora’s occupation (police officer) and solid reputation but also the physical evidence (burns and imprints) and the confirmatory testimony of witnesses who saw the UFO’s departure (see **Socorro CE2/CE3**).





When James Templeton took this photograph of his daughter Elizabeth on a family outing near Carlisle, England, in May 1964, no one saw the figure in a "space suit" behind her. The figure remains unexplained. (Fortean Picture Library)

If the Socorro episode was nearly everything a cautious, intellectually serious UFO proponent could ask for, the incident that supposedly took place elsewhere, in Newark Valley, New York, on the morning of the same day would prove far more characteristic of the kinds of reports to come—reports that would throw much of ufology into chaos and confusion and from there into obscurantism and occultism—all because UFO theorists sought an all-encompassing hypothesis in which experiences as diverse as those claimed at Socorro and at Newark Valley could be subsumed under one explanatory scheme.

In the latter instance, a young farmer named Gary Wilcox asserted that he had seen a landed UFO on his property as he was attending to chores. Standing near it were two small figures clad from head to toe in silvery garments. From the tray each was holding, Wilcox inferred that they were collecting plant and soil samples.

They engaged him in conversation via a "voice" whose precise source he was unable to determine. They said they had come from Mars on a scientific expedition and remarked matter-of-factly, if vaguely, that gravitational and other changes would occur in the solar system. After two hours the beings departed. Where they and their ship had been, Wilcox found several small depressions in the soil as well as a jellylike substance that he tried without success to pick up.

Though there were no other witnesses, Wilcox's evident sincerity, sanity, and indifference to publicity or profit impressed everyone, including NICAP investigator Walter N. Webb. Yet the story was absurd on its face. No modern astronomer would credit the notion that Mars harbors an intelligent civilization, and, heretofore, meetings with Martians had been claimed only by contactees and visionaries. Logically, anyone telling a tale like this one had to be a liar or a lunatic; to the perplexity and irritation of just about everybody seeking a rational approach to UFO reports (and expecting them to be rational in return), Wilcox seemed to be neither. His account oddly wed aspects of conventional CE3s—spacesuited humanoids col-



lecting samples—to elements of traditional contactee lore—extended communication, though here with neither Space Brothers nor the requisite sermons.

**Abduction enigmas.** In its January/February 1965 issue *Flying Saucer Review* (FSR) took ufology into uncharted waters with the first of a number of articles on a Brazilian sexual encounter, said to have taken place near Sao Francisco de Salles, Minas Gerais, in the early morning hours of October 16, 1957 (see **Sex and UFOs**).

Ufologists were beginning to sense that the phenomenon might be more complicated, more strange, than anyone had suspected in the first two decades of the UFO era. Either that, or the reports were getting stranger. Remarking on the wave that erupted in late April 1964 and continued into the summer, NICAP noted the “unprecedented number of landing, near-landing and close-approach cases.” FSR and the *A.P.R.O. Bulletin* reported extensively on the many fantastic stories of alien encounters being recounted in the South American press and, less frequently, investigated by Latin ufologists.

According to a sensational *Boston Traveler* series published in late October 1965, a 1961 case originally reported as a CE3 in which shadowy humanoids had been glimpsed inside a hovering UFO turned out to have a whole new dimension. The two witnesses, Barney and Betty Hill of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, asserted that a period of missing time, along with other seemingly inexplicable anomalies, had bothered them ever since their sighting. Finally they sought relief through hypnosis with Boston psychiatrist Benjamin Simon. In that state they independently “recalled” that the UFO had landed and its humanoid crew had subjected each to a physical examination. Betty Hill described an extensive conversation with the leader (see **Hill Abduction Case**).

New sighting waves in 1965 and 1966 brought yet more reports, and even pro-CE3/anti-contactee ufologists were growing less certain about what had once seemed a firm distinction. Other abduction reports, with or without missing time, were emerging. It now looked as if UFOs were as much a ground-level phenomenon as an aerial one.

J. Allen Hynek gave CE3s their name in 1972, adding as he did so that “I would gladly omit this part if I could without offense to scientific integrity”; yet “why should a report of a car stopped on the highway by a blinding light from an unknown craft be any different in essential strangeness or absurdity from one of a craft from which two or three little animate creatures descend?”

Most researchers kept speculation about these matters to a minimum, preferring such pragmatic tasks as the investigation of specific cases, the compilation of masses of reports, and the search for patterns in the data. (The two most significant patterns were that CE3s were most likely to occur in the nocturnal hours and that the reported occupants were overwhelmingly humanoid.) Among the most active of these pragmatists were Walter Webb (the first investigator of the Hill case), his brother David Webb, and Ted Bloecher. In 1974 the latter two formed the

Humanoid Study Group, under the aegis of the Texas-based Mutual UFO Network (MUFON), and compiled HUMCAT, a catalogue of all known CE3s, each rated according to Webb and Bloecher's judgment of their credibility.

The idea of alien abductions did not really exist in the ufological universe until the mid-1960s, and the Hill case was assumed to be an anomalous sort of CE3. NICAP spoke for ufology's conservative wing when it accepted Dr. Simon's explanation that the whole affair was no more than a "dream via hypnosis," though that was emphatically not the opinion held by NICAP's own investigator of the case.

The **University of Colorado UFO Project**, which in 1966 initiated a government-financed study, investigated a December 3, 1967, report by an Ashland, Nebraska, police sergeant, Herbert Schirmer, who remembered an early-morning close encounter but could not account for a period of missing time. Hypnotized by R. Leo Sprinkle, a University of Wyoming psychologist, Schirmer "recalled" being taken aboard the UFO, meeting humanoids, communicating at length with one, and touring the craft (see **Schirmer Abduction Case**).

Over the next three decades, as abduction reports overwhelmed ufologists, their significance would become a source of great dispute. Some prominent investigators, notably Budd Hopkins and David M. Jacobs, would argue that abductions are events, in other words literal, physical interactions with extraterrestrials. Others, such as Kenneth Ring and John E. Mack, would see them as paranormal in nature, while a third school—including Hilary Evans and Martin S. Kottmeyer—held forth for subjective, **psychosocial** causes. Hardly anyone seemed willing to concede that abduction experiences may arise from a variety of stimuli both mundane and extraordinary. All sides would assume an all-or-nothing stance, all but assuring that any discussion would quickly be stalemated (see **Abduction Phenomenon**).

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- This entry also draws on the Humanoid Catalogue (HUMCAT), compiled in the 1970s and early 1980s by Ted Bloecher and David Webb.*

## COLUSA CE1

At 12:54 a.m. on September 10, 1976, watching television in his home three miles southwest of Colusa, California, Bill Pecha, Jr., saw the picture tube crackle, fade, and black out. At the same moment the air conditioner died. Assuming the circuit breakers had failed, Pecha stepped out of the house, turned to the right (south), and walked on his lawn. A few feet from the underground cable running between his machine shop and his house, he felt the hair on his body rise.

He now thought the cable was shorting out. Yet even when he moved away from the cable, the electrical sensation continued. Looking up, he saw a large domed, disc-shaped object hovering silently about 50 feet away. It was situated

just above a television antenna attached to a telephone pole, and part of the rim appeared to be directly above his barn's 40-foot-high gable roof.

The dome had vertical ribs with concave sections. The dome and its base were silver-gray, and the bottom portion looked porcelainlike (possibly an effect of the light, Pecha thought); the outer rim, which rotated in a clockwise direction, resembled stainless steel. From a 10-foot-wide circle in the middle of the underside, a translucent shaft of grayish white light shone. Strangely, it went only five or six feet downward before ending abruptly in the middle of the air. It did not shine or even reflect on the ground.

At opposite edges of the UFO's perimeter (the left and right sides from Pecha's perspective) two hooklike arms, angled inward, hung down. On either side, roughly between the hooks and the central light shaft, three "cables" extended. They were six to eight feet long and two to three inches thick. The three on the left (north) side were staggered at a 45-degree angle over the sloping south roof of the barn, as if to keep from touching it.

Pecha approached the UFO until he stood just under its southern edge. From his description, an investigative team from the **Aerial Phenomena Research Organization** (APRO) was able to estimate the object's size: 85 feet in diameter. After a short period of time the UFO began slowly to move toward the west. When it was 75 to 150 feet from Pecha, it retracted the cables. The hooks swiveled upward and inward halfway. Two hatches on the north and south ends opened, revealing a "spotlight" lamp. According to investigators:

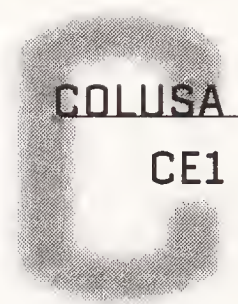
The "spotlights" were held out by cable-like fixtures. . . . The spotlights came on as soon as they popped out. They emitted collimated shafts of "lights" that hit the ground at about a 45-degree (outward) angle.

Pecha ran for the house to awaken his wife. His banging on the wall brought Lenda Pecha quickly out of slumber, and she sighted a light when she looked through the dining-room window. It "reminded me," she said, "of an airplane light—like an airplane getting ready to land. . . . Then, all of a sudden, there was light coming from underneath it, and it was shining [on] the ground beneath it." The frost-colored light was in the form of a tubular cone.

From his position in the bedroom of their still-sleeping 10-year-old son, Chris, Bill Pecha saw two more UFOs over high-tension electrical-power lines a mile to the west. In the words of the APRO team's report:

Each object was between and above two towers. The arrangement was: tower-1, UFO, tower-2, open cables..., tower-3[,] UFO, tower-4.

Each of these far encounter UFOs emitted two light-like beams that hit the tops of the power transmission towers each object was between. The right hand UFO's beams were blue and all four towers were lit up in blue light. The beams were emitted upwards at 30 to 45 degrees below





the horizontal. The towers held up six power lines. One or both of the highest two of these lines glowed bright red from the insulators of towers-1 and 2 out to an estimated fifty to one hundred feet on both sides of the towers, Pecha reported. (These were the same towers lit up in blue light by the UFO on the left.) The beams on towers-1 and 2 had "darker" (by this Pecha said he meant brighter, or more intense) blue "jerky" light streams inside them, Pecha said. He said the "jerkiness" was unlike lightning or a zig-zag and it did not seem to have a phase velocity or motion. He could not determine if the beams from the UFO on the right had these "jerky" light-streams or if the power lines near towers-3 and 4 glowed red. The towers and the UFO on the right were more distant than the ones on the left. The left-hand towers were about 4,450 and 5,150 feet away (towers-1 and 2, respectively)—the lines between these towers pointed about 53 degrees off Pecha's line of sight (so he had a good view of them). The right-hand towers were about 6,200 and 7,320 feet away (towers-3 and 4 respectively). But the lines on these latter towers are pointed only 4 1/2 degrees off Pecha's line of sight—hence they would have been difficult to see. (The lines from towers-1 and 2 run southeast to northwest, but turn almost due west at tower-2.) Both objects appear to have had width/height ratios of about 3 (long axis horizontal). Pecha thought he spotted "spotlight" fixtures on the left-hand UFO that were emitting the beams.

Dashing out of the bedroom, Pecha shouted that they had to get out of there or the UFO would "get" them. When Mrs. Pecha glanced out the window again, the first UFO was now much closer.

Meanwhile other observers were viewing the UFO, which they perceived as a large moving light, from two miles away. They were able to see it for approximately a minute and a half.

From his dining-room window Pecha followed the UFO's continuing approach. (The APRO investigators would later judge its altitude to have been between 500 and 900 feet.) As it passed over his neighbor's house 2500 feet away, he recalled, "this light [from the bottom center] was lowered. . . . [It] just dropped on, and it was just as bright as a flash-cube light type. It was really a bright, brilliant . . . white light." Lenda Pecha, whose attention was not on the object at all times (because of her worry about her husband), did not see the light drop but did witness the light as it covered the neighbors' house, barn, and aircraft hangar.

Pecha saw the two distant UFOs shoot off at 45-degree angles, one going south, the other north. While Lenda was retrieving their daughter, a reddish amber light in the middle of the nearby UFO brightened. For some reason Pecha thought it was a spotlight that was about to be aimed at him (two spotlights at either end of the craft were "workin' on the ground" all the while). The UFO was now about 1000 feet away, halfway between the neighbors' property and the Pechas's.

He pulled Chris out of bed, and he, his wife, and their other two children ran for the pickup. Fearing the UFO would see them if he turned the headlights on, Pecha drove at over 90 mph without lights.

On the outskirts of Colusa, Pecha stopped at the house of longtime friends Leslie and Gayle Arant and banged on their door until Mrs. Arant opened it. Pecha shouted that she should look up at the sky. She would tell investigators that “over in the west there was this large object with a white—very brilliant white—light underneath. . . . It was dark in the middle, but you could see the outline. And it reminded you of a saucer—and [the cup] was turned upside down. . . . It went from west to the east.”

Les Arant got out of bed in time to witness the object’s departure to the south. It shot up and disappeared within half a second. The incident ended at 1:03 a.m.

Later, Bob Pratt, the UFO reporter for the *National Enquirer* (which investigated but did not publish the sighting), found yet another witness, who reported seeing a pulsating, darting orange-red light in the west. It was heading south when she went inside.

The timing of the power blackout and the UFO’s appearance apparently was coincidental. Pacific Gas & Electric confirmed that a blackout had occurred at 12:54 a.m., but the lines over which the two distant UFOs had been seen belonged to the Central Valley Project, a federal power system. A substation had blown an overload transformer.

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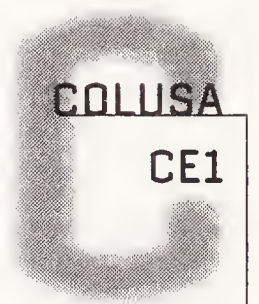
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**CONDON, EDWARD UHLER.**

→See University of Colorado UFO Project.



## CONDON COMMITTEE.

→See University of Colorado UFO Project.

## CONSPIRACY THEORIES AND UFOS.

→See Dark Side and Paranormal and Occult Theories about UFOs.

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Contactees believe, or claim to believe, they are in regular communication with benevolent extraterrestrial intelligences, often referred to as Space Brothers. Space Brothers are essentially angels in spacesuits: strikingly handsome or beautiful (there are also ET women, but for some reason the phrase "Space Sisters" has never caught on), usually with longish blond hair and a wise, patient manner. They are here because the earth is an outlaw planet whose warlike ways alarm members of the Galactic Federation or its equivalent, an alliance of good ETs who are doing battle against evil forces in the universe. The earth is about to undergo vast changes resulting from geological upheaval in which much of the population will be destroyed. Those who survive will enter a golden age under the tutelage of Space Brothers and their earthly agents, the contactees.

**Contactees before 1947.** Contactees typically have a history of involvement with occultism and New Age doctrines. The space people they encounter discourse at length on cosmic science and philosophy, and the earthly provenance of the content is not hard to discern. The core of the contactee message is simply a continuation of the teaching of the occult-metaphysical religious tradition.

Perhaps the first contactee was the Swedish scientist and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), author of *Earths in the Solar World* (1758), a chronicle of his astral travels to other planets and the moon. He found each to be inhabited, and he communicated at length with their residents. His book describes these worlds, their peoples, and their societies. Of Martians, for example, he writes, "Everyone there lives content with his goods, and everyone with his honor, in being esteemed just, and one that loves his neighbor."

During the nineteenth century, as fascination with Spiritualism swept Europe and America, mediums on occasion channeled material from alleged extraterrestrials. The most celebrated case involved Catherine Elise Muller, called "Helene Smith" in a classic work on abnormal psychology, Theodore Flournoy's *From India to the Planet Mars* (1899). In various states of consciousness Muller interacted with Martians and "saw" the Martian landscape. She even produced what pur-

ported to be a Martian language but what proved on analysis to be, in Flournoy's words, "an infantile travesty of French." Like other turn-of-the-century contactees, Muller reported seeing canals on the red planet's surface, in line with the popular belief—inspired by the now-discredited observations of astronomer Percival Lowell—that a vast irrigation system criss-crosses Mars.

The influential occult writer Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891), founder of Theosophy, proposed a complex supernatural order with a hierarchy of "ascended masters." Among them are the "Lords of the Flame," who live on Venus. Blavatsky had little to say about them, but they played a large role in the Americanized, pop form of Theosophy, the Great I AM, devised in the 1930s by Guy and Edna Ballard, "who," sociologist David W. Stuppel remarks dryly, "most observers feel were frauds." Inside the Grand Teton Mountains, Guy Ballard met 12 "tall masters from Venus." J. Gordon Melton of the Institute for the Study of American Religion observes:

Not only did Ballard become the first to actually build a religion on contact with extraterrestrials (as opposed to merely incorporating the extraterrestrial data into another already existing religion), but his emphasis was placed upon frequent contact with the masters from whom he received regular messages to the followers of the world contactee movement. The movement took over the I AM hierarchy and changed it into a space command hierarchy.

An object very much like some described during the great 1896-97 UFO wave (see **Airship Sightings in the Nineteenth Century**) was sighted over San Diego during the evening of October 9, 1946. It had, according to witnesses, a long, tube-shaped fuselage with great bat- or butterflylike wings. Among the witnesses was medium Mark Probert, who subsequently told the press that he had communicated psychically with the ship's occupants. "The people are nonaggressive and have been trying to contact the earth for many years," he said.

**The rise of the movement.** In early 1952 **George Van Tassel**, who lived in the high desert between Yucca Valley and Joshua Tree, California, began holding meetings in which he channeled telepathic communications from the commanders of starships ("ventlas"). Van Tassel hosted the annual Giant Rock Interplanetary Spacecraft Convention, the major public gathering of contactees and their followers, until 1977.

Along with Van Tassel, **George Adamski** helped found the contactee movement of southern California. Its influence would be felt around the world, and Adamski, who would become a significant international occult celebrity, had already attracted some attention on the UFO scene through photographs he claimed to have taken of spaceships in and out of earth's atmosphere. Since the 1920s Adamski had made his living as a teacher in the California metaphysical scene and in the 1940s wrote a self-published novel, *Pioneers of Space*, whose content bore a curious resemblance to his later "true" stories of meetings with Venusians, Martians, and Saturnians recounted in his books *Inside the Space Ships* (1955) and *Flying Saucers Farewell* (1961).



Contactee Dana Howard at the 1955 Giant Rock Interplanetary Spacecraft Convention. Former Project Blue Book head Edward J. Ruppelt (in sunglasses) grins in background. (J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies)

Most contactees from Adamski on would describe benevolent visitors from a densely populated universe, but not all contactees would be like Adamski. Two kinds of contact claimants would come into prominence.

The first, those who like Adamski alleged physical encounters and who produced "evidence" to prove it, dominated the scene in the 1950s. They included Daniel Fry, Truman Bethurum, George Hunt Williamson, and others. They were nearly universally despised by ufologists, who felt that their actions were making the whole UFO question look ridiculous. "Sincere" was an adjective seldom used to characterize the testimony of these individuals, who were—to one degree or another—con men, even if, in some, cynicism and conviction shared an uneasy coexistence. Though dominating the attention of both UFO and non-UFO media in the 1950s, these more questionable contactees were less representative of the movement than the other type, around whom the movement has traditionally been built.

**The contactee mainstream.** The second and more typical contactee felt himself or herself to be the recipient of psychic messages from extraterrestrials. These messages were communicated in various ways: through automatic writing, voices in the head, dreams, visions, and channeling (once called mediumship).

One of the first notable psychic contactees was Dorothy Martin (now known as Sister Thedra and headquartered in Mount Shasta, California), a Chicago woman who received communications via automatic writing from Sananda, an extraterrestrial who said he had been Jesus in a previous incarnation. Martin was told that cataclysmic earth changes would take place on December 21, 1954, and that she





and her faithful followers would be rescued by a flying saucer just before a massive tidal wave destroyed the city.

As the date approached, she and the group were instructed to inform the press of the imminent end of the world. When none of the prophesied events occurred, Martin and company were subjected not only to massive public ridicule but, in some cases, to sanity hearings. Martin's principal supporter, Charles Laughead, was forced to resign his position on the staff of Michigan State College Hospital. Others had quit their jobs, given away their money, or dropped out of school in anticipation of apocalyptic things to come. The episode is the subject of *When Prophecy Fails* (1956), a classic study in the sociology of religion.

Psychic contactee Gloria Lee heard a voice inside her head one day in 1953. The voice belonged to a resident of Jupiter, J.W. Over the next several years Lee wrote down J.W.'s messages and published them in *Why We Are Here* (1959), a popular book in contactee circles. Lee became most famous, however, as a martyr of the movement. In the fall of 1962, J.W. instructed her to go on a fast for peace. The fast would end when a "light elevator" arrived to take her to Jupiter. Some weeks into the fast he told her she was to travel to Washington, DC, and present spaceship blueprints to government officials. On November 28, as she waited for word in a Washington hotel room, she slipped into a coma, and on December 2 she died. Her fast had lasted 66 days.

To ufologists as well as to observers in the cultural mainstream, contactees seemed little more than bizarre examples of fraud and social pathology. It was implicitly assumed that their numbers were few. In the 1960s, however, writer/investigator John A. Keel remarked on the surprising number of "silent contactees," as he called them to differentiate them from the public ones, he was finding out in the field. Keel concluded that these persons were having real experiences but not with, as they thought, benevolent Space Brothers—a notion earlier advanced by Trevor James Constable who came to believe many contacting entities are demons in disguise. To Keel the beings are amoral paranormal "ultraterrestrials" bent on doing contactees—and by extension all human beings—wrong. This interpretation would be embraced by conservative Christian UFO chroniclers.

In 1973, Brad Steiger's *Revelation: The Divine Fire* documented the growing channeling movement. Many of the channelers were getting messages, warnings, and admonitions from Space Brothers. In a sequel, *Gods of Aquarius* (1976), Steiger dealt exclusively with the new generation of flying-saucer contactees. The book contains Steiger's first mention of "Star People" who are "becoming active at this time in an effort to aid mankind [to] survive a coming Great Purification of the planet." In a later chapter he relates his discovery of "Star Maidens," beautiful, intelligent, compassionate earthwomen who in an earlier life were extraterrestrials.

Subsequently Steiger would be married for a time to one Star Maiden, Francie Paschal, and they would further develop the concept of Star People. Star People got their widest exposure in the May 1, 1979, issue of the *National Enquirer*,



which reported on the Steigers's theories and brought them a flood of mail and telephone calls from persons claiming to be Star People.

Beginning in 1981 Berkley would publish five paperbacks in the "Star People Series," spreading the message further. The Steigers reported they were finding two groups of space-linked people: the Starseeds (the true Star People, who have both alien and human genes) and the Star Helpers ("Old Souls," descendants of the disciples of the extraterrestrials). At one point the couple were receiving as many as 70 letters a day from "activated Star People," some of whom were prophesying a catastrophic pole shift between 1982 and 1984, a world famine in 1982, World War III before 1985, and planet-wide space contacts in 1986. The collapse of the Steigers's marriage and metaphysical partnership (as well as Francie's subsequent death) slowed the Star People movement.

**The Rocky Mountain conferences.** Another important figure in the modern contactee movement is R. Leo Sprinkle, who until his retirement into private practice in 1989 was a psychologist in the counseling department of the University of Wyoming. Sprinkle was unusual in having a foot in both the ufology and contactee camps, though the latter, the focus of his deeper sympathies, would claim his greater attention as time passed.

Sprinkle entered ufology as a consultant to the **Aerial Phenomena Research Organization** (APRO) and as a participant in the 1968 Symposium on Unidentified Flying Objects at the U.S. House Committee on Science and Astronautics. As a hypnotist he worked with a number of abductees, including Nebraska police officer Herbert Schirmer (see **Schirmer Abduction Case**) and others whose stories would be

Frank Scully (left),  
author of the  
controversial  
"Behind the Flying  
Saucers," with  
contactee Daniel  
Fry at the Giant  
Rock Convention.  
(J. Allen Hynek  
Center for UFO  
Studies)





widely reported in the UFO literature. In the 1970s Sprinkle entered into correspondence with contactees who had written him about their psychic communications with beings whom Sprinkle would good-naturedly call "UFOlk." Sprinkle helped the contactees get in touch with each other by mail. By decade's end he had established a small network of like-minded persons who were able to share ideas and experiences.

The next step, Sprinkle thought, was to have these people meet in person. So in May 1980 the first Rocky Mountain Conference on UFO Investigation was held in Laramie, on the university campus. Attendance was small, but from those who did show up Sprinkle was able to develop some initial impressions. They seemed to be average, normal people in their social and psychological functioning, though highly susceptible to hypnotic suggestion. A great many of them reported a feeling of being monitored or experiencing continued contact with UFO entities and, on occasion, a feeling of having been chosen or selected as a contactee. As a result they often expressed a sense that they had an important mission or task in life. They sometimes experienced anxiety about the state of the human race, and they warned others of the possibility of future catastrophes. They often possessed a deep conviction that they were not only Planetary Persons but also Cosmic Citizens and sometimes acted as if their real home were beyond earth.

In the next years the Rocky Mountain conferences became a popular pilgrimage site for contactees, just as the one at Giant Rock had been for an earlier generation. By the 1990s the conferences were drawing more than 150 participants. The 1996 one, the first to be sponsored by the Fort Collins, Colorado-based International Association for New Science, attracted nearly 200. According to Sprinkle:

[T]he messages and/or contacts that are reported by UFO Experiencers are very consistent over time. The two themes: ETs are presenting themselves to Humankind in order to (a) rejuvenate the planet (whatever that means) and (b) assist Humankind in its next stage of evolution (whatever that means). . . . [I]ndividual UFOers are given a personal puzzle or mission. It seems to involve society . . . and so the UFOer reacts in fear/anger/doubt. Later, when the personal transformation occurs, then the UFOer is able to work cooperatively with others in hopes of assisting in the social transformation: physical/biological/psychosocial/spiritual changes to assist Planet Earth and prepare for public contact with ETs and/or entrance into the Galactic Federation.

The Rocky Mountain conferences serve to validate contactees' experiences. Left to themselves, individual contactees may come to disbelieve the messages they are hearing. Some even conclude that their source is within their psyches, not on another planet. But when contactees gather at Laramie, they are able to see themselves not as isolated individuals undergoing fantastic visions that cause them to question their own sanity, but as members of a larger community with a cosmic mission.



Another University of Wyoming psychologist, June O. Parnell, wrote her Ph.D. dissertation on a psychological study of more than 200 contactees who had attended the conference at various times. She found no detectable psychological differences between contactees and "normal" persons. Melton states that efforts to categorize contactees as "kooks" are

reminiscent of the way Pentacostals were dismissed as psychopathological by psychologists who had never studied Pentacostalism. Recent studies have indicated that as a whole Pentacostals have a higher mental-health rate than the general population. When people claim that contactees have a pathological bent, it would be a very good idea to ask, "Where are your data?", since unorthodox behavior and beliefs are no sign in themselves of psychopathology.

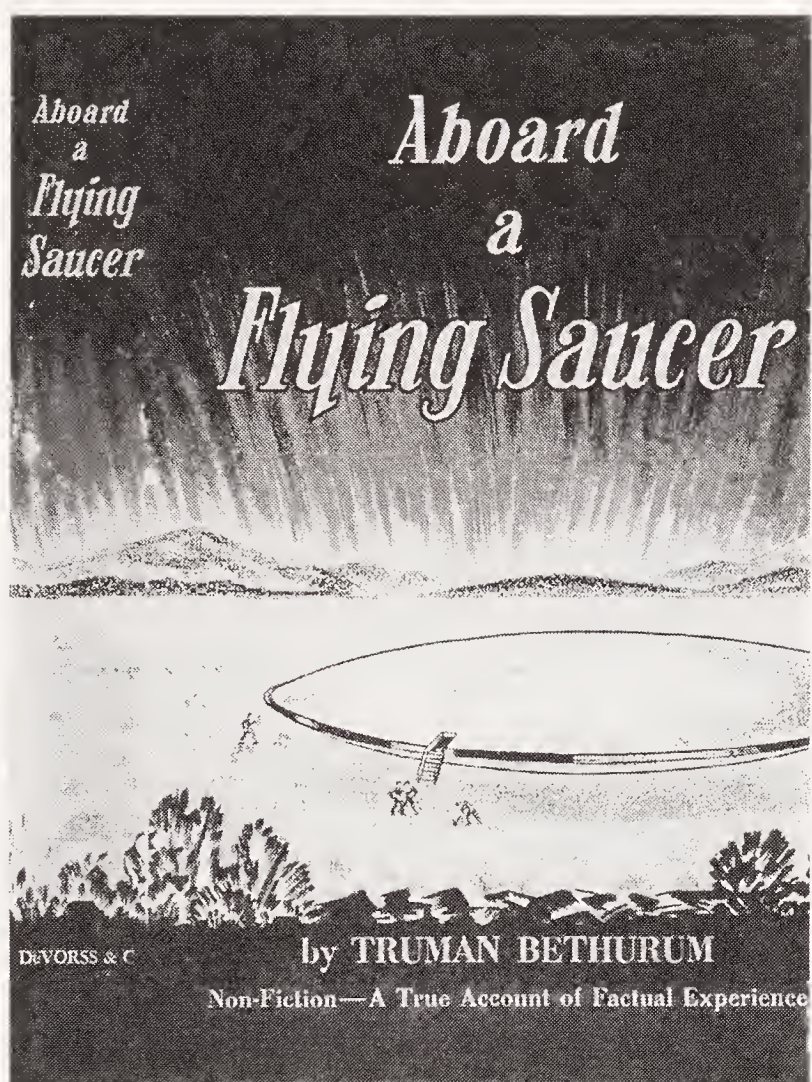
**Contactees and ufologists.** From the start ufologists and saucerians (persons who believed and supported contactees) occupied separate mental universes, and relatively few moved back and forth between them. Less hostile to ufologists than ufologists were to them, saucerians tended to see UFO researchers as not fully enlightened counterparts who nonetheless had a role to play in the ongoing cosmic drama; thus they were willing to overlook much of the abuse directed at them from the occupants of more conservative quarters.

For example, **Donald E. Keyhoe**, director of the Washington-based **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP), fired a secretary when her pro-contactee sympathies became known. On another occasion NICAP published a devastating debunking of one Adamski claim. Yet on January 28, 1965, in an unsolicited letter written four months before his death, Adamski addressed Keyhoe as if the two were colleagues committed to the same cause: "What the difference of opinion may be between us, it matters not," he said. "I believe that both of us are interested in the same thing. And that is, to have the Truth of the Visitors brought out to the public. . . ." Keyhoe, who did not reply, was no doubt horrified.

In fact, the differences between saucerians and ufologists were to all intents and purposes insurmountable. Saucerians spoke in an occult-tinged language that, consciously or unconsciously, echoed Swedenborg, Blavatsky, the Ballards, and N. Meade Layne. Where ufologists spoke of "UFOs," saucerians had flying saucers, spaceships, scoutcraft, motherships, ventlas, and vimanas. The saucerians had no "UFO mystery" to contend with.

**Abductees or contactees?** In 1965 a Boston newspaper broke the story of the Barney and Betty **Hill abduction case**, and soon comparable reports were coming to light. Some were consciously recalled in their entirety. In other instances, witnesses had partial memories, usually of a UFO's close approach, followed by amnesia. Later, memory would re-emerge either via spontaneous recollection or through hypnotic regression. The witnesses came from the same diverse backgrounds as other UFO reporters. In other words, they were not mystics, occultists, or swindlers.





Truman Bethurum tells of his encounter with "scow" from the planet Clarion in "Aboard a Flying Saucer," published in 1954. (Fortean Picture Library)

essentially: 'You'll be fine/Hold still/You won't be harmed/You'll be back home soon'—much like a nurse would tell a child in a doctor's office." Some abductees, after exposure to New Age-oriented probers, move from anger and trauma to acceptance and even embrace of their alleged alien captors, seeing the unpleasantness of their experience as a necessary rite into a higher spiritual consciousness.

Of all those seeking to extract a contacteelike message from the abduction experience, Harvard University psychiatrist John E. Mack is far and away the best known and the most influential. In his book, *Abduction* (1994), Mack portrays abducting humanoids as rougher versions of the older Space Brothers, albeit with updated concerns: pollution this time, not atomic bombs. "If, in fact, the alien beings are closer to the divine source or *anima mundi* than human beings generally seem to be . . . their presence among us, however cruel and traumatic in some instances, may be part of a larger process that is bringing us back to God," he argues. The aliens are here to expand the consciousnesses both of individual abductees and of all humanity.

Hypnotized, Mack's abductees recall not only previous lives but abductions in previous lives. Others have previous lives as aliens. Mack encourages them to

By the 1980s the **abduction phenomenon** had become a staple of popular culture, and reports proliferated along with books, movies, television programs, and conferences on the subject. An abductee culture arose in the form of therapy groups, some led by individuals of a New Age orientation, and occult pilgrims once attracted to contactees moved on to abductees, assuring them of the extraterrestrials' benevolent intentions.

By the end of the decade and continuing to the present, proponents of a positive reading of abduction were speaking in a language indistinguishable from saucerian rhetoric. A few abductees do report positive experiences with friendly extraterrestrials, but most describe the abducting entities as cold and clinical in their demeanor. One experienced investigator, John Carpenter, writes, "In approximately 90 percent of the cases . . . the only communication, if any, is

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express love for, and even identification with, their tormentors and to act with the conviction that they are conduits through whom the aliens' message will spread. Mack hints that he himself may be part of the cosmic game plan.

The parallels between Mack's abductees and traditional contactees are sometimes striking. For example, one of the former reports hearing these words from an extraterrestrial named Ageeka: "You have sensitivity. . . . You pick up on things. You can talk to the earth. . . . You can hear the anguish of the spirits. You can hear the wailing cries of the imbalances." Compare these words allegedly spoken to a famous early contactee, Orfeo Angelucci, as recorded in his *The Secret of the Saucers* (1955):

Weep, Orfeo. Let tears unblind your eyes. For at this moment we weep with you for Earth and her Children.

For all its apparent beauty Earth is a purgatorial world among the planets evolving intelligent life. Hate, selfishness and cruelty rise from many parts of it like a dark mist.

If the effort to graft the contactee message onto the abduction experience shows signs of strain, it nonetheless underscores the continuing religious appeal, to some, of the idea of extraterrestrial visitors.

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"Son of the Sun" is Orfeo Angelucci's account of his alien contact. (Fortean Picture Library)



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## CONTROL SYSTEM.

→See Paranormal and Occult Theories about UFOs.

COYNE CE2

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In any arguing of the case for the reality of UFOs as extraordinary phenomena, the incident that happened near Mansfield, Ohio, on the night of October 18, 1973, looms large. It happened in the midst of a great UFO wave that engulfed the United States that month. The encounter reported by Army Reserve Capt. Lawrence J. Coyne and his helicopter crew, 1st Lt. Arrigo Jezzi, Sgt. John Healey, and Spec. 5 Robert Yanacsek, however, at first attracted little attention.

At around 10:30 p.m. on the eighteenth, with Jezzi flying the craft from the left-hand seat, an Army Reserve UH-1 Huey helicopter left Columbus, Ohio, and headed back to Cleveland, where it was based. Coyne and his men had flown earlier in the evening to Columbus to take their regularly scheduled medical examinations. It was a clear, cool evening. The route was familiar.

Just before 11 o'clock, as the helicopter cruised at 1200 feet above the farms, woods, and hills of north-central Ohio (2500 feet above sea level), Healey, seated at the left rear, noticed a steady, southbound red light. It looked like the port-wing light of an aircraft but seemed brighter than normal. Also it carried none of the other lights FAA regulations require. Healey watched it disappear from sight behind the helicopter. He said nothing about it to his flight mates.

Soon afterwards, at about 11:02, Yanacsek, in the right rear seat, saw a bright red light on the eastern horizon. It was not a star, he judged, and it seemed too high to be a radio tower; besides, it was not blinking. He continued to observe

it for the next minute and a half. He realized it was keeping pace with the helicopter. When he finally mentioned it, Coyne casually suggested that Healey keep an eye on it.

Half a minute later Yanacsek saw the light had turned and was now coming toward the helicopter. Taking over the controls from Jezzi, Coyne put the helicopter into a normal 500-feet-per-minute descent. He depressed his heel microphone and called Mansfield Approach Control, where F-100 interceptors were based. He already was on that frequency because he had spoken with Mansfield (to the northwest) a few minutes earlier to secure clearance to fly through the area.

"Mansfield, this is Army helicopter 15444," he said. "Do you have any high-performance aircraft in your area?" Mansfield responded, "This is Mansfield Approach. Go ahead, one-five-triple-four." Coyne pushed in the mike again, repeated the question, released the mike, and waited for the response. None came. He instructed Jezzi to try again and, if that failed, try Mansfield Tower. Jezzi could not reach them on either UHF or VHF frequency. He could hear the channel-change and mike-keying sounds that proved that the stations were tuned in and the equipment was working as it should—but beyond that, nothing.

The red light now was closing on the helicopter at a dangerous rate of speed. Under 10,000 feet aircraft are not allowed to fly at more than 250 knots (285 mph); this aircraft was moving at what Coyne estimated to be 600 knots (684 mph). Fearing an imminent collision, Coyne pushed the collective pitch (control stick) all the way down, glancing at the altimeter as he did so. The helicopter was at 1700 feet above the ground. It was now descending at 2000 feet per minute.

When the helicopter got to within 650 feet of the treetops below (1700 feet above sea level), Coyne was shocked to see the object covering the entire front windshield. The red light was on its nose, to the witnesses' left. A white light shone at the tail of the cigar-shaped, metallic structure. Beneath this tail light a pyramid-shaped green beam swept a 90-degree arc and shone through the helicopter windshield, then covered the entire aircraft. The object itself was not glowing, but its outlines were clearly visible in the reflection cast by the lights it carried and also against the starry background. It had no wings or identifying marks.

As Yanacsek would put it, "The object may have hovered over us for 10 to 12 seconds. . . . It seemed like it was there for so damn long. It was just stopped, for maybe 10 to 12 seconds, and I mean *stopped*. . . . It was coming at us, and then . . . it was there, just like that."

The object hovered silently there—in front of and above them—before accelerating and heading off toward the northwest. All that the witnesses could see of it now was its white rear light. After executing a sharp 45-degree turn to the right, the light "snapped out," in Healey's words, "and over the edge of the world it went."





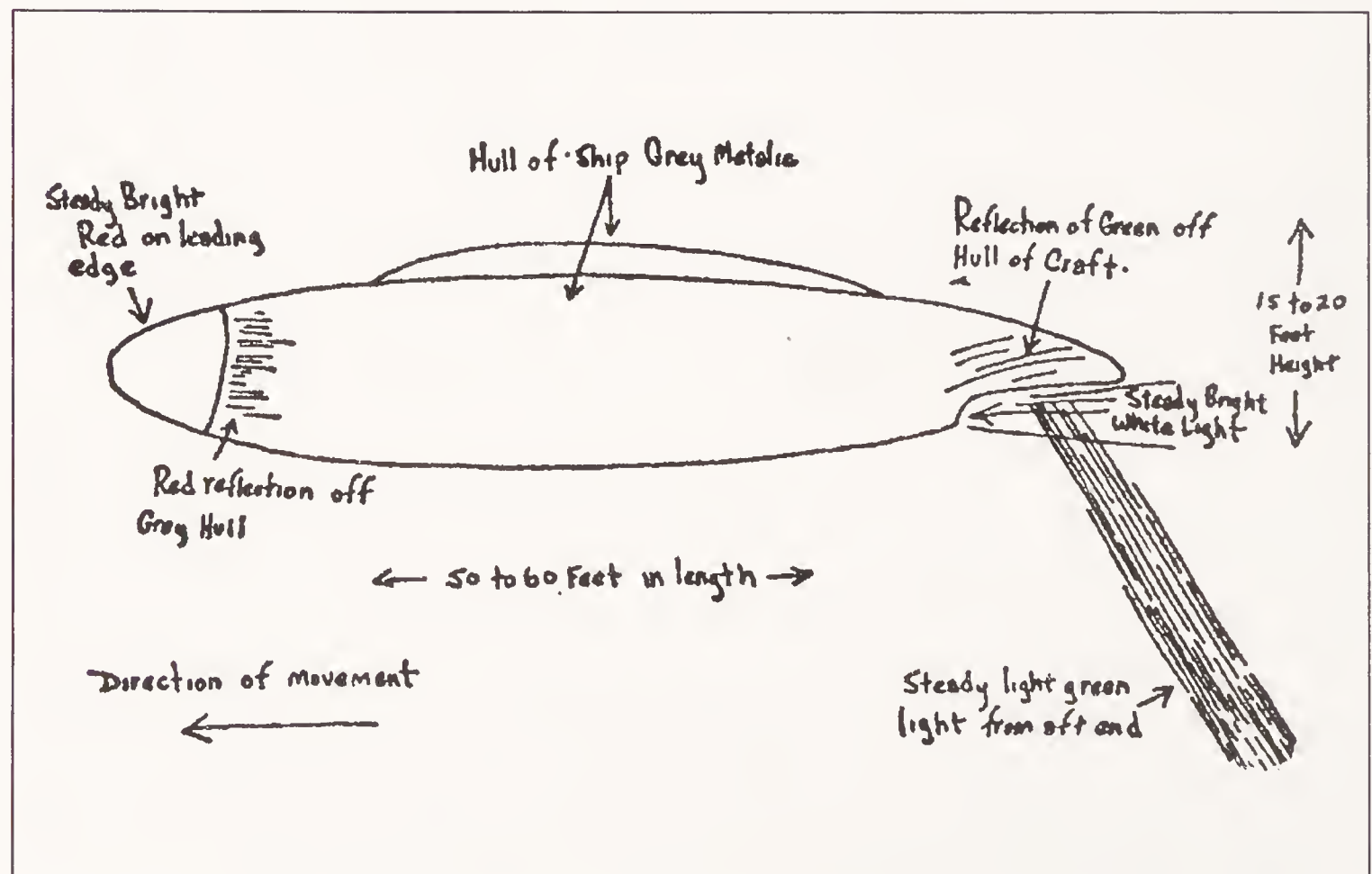
"My God, what's happening?" Coyne asked. He had just looked at the altimeter and learned that as the crew's attention was focused on the departing object, the helicopter had not been descending but *ascending*. The Huey was at 3500 feet above sea level and climbing at 1000 feet per minute. (At that rate of speed, the 1800-foot ascent between 1700 and 3500 feet would have taken 108 seconds.) Yet the collective was still in the full-down position. In other words, the helicopter should have been moving *downward*.

Coyne lifted the collective—the opposite of what one would do to arrest a climb under ordinary circumstances—but these were not ordinary circumstances. At 3800 feet a slight bump shook the helicopter. The ascent ended as inexplicably as it had begun.

The Huey resumed its previous cruise altitude. It made radio contact with Akron/Canton with no trouble and flew on to Cleveland without further incident.

Three years later investigators found that other witnesses had seen the strange encounter. (These witnesses asked to remain anonymous.) Around 11:05 p.m. on October 18, 1973, a woman and four adolescent children, driving east on a deserted rural road and approaching a bridge that spans the Charles Mill Reservoir east-southeast of Mansfield, saw two lights in the sky, the one in front a bright red, the other, behind it, a dim green, flying as a unit and coming from the east at a one- or two-o'clock position in the sky. Then to their right (south to southwest) they saw the lights of a helicopter at a low altitude. As the helicopter lights and the red and green lights converged, the mother pulled the car over, and two of the

Captain Lawrence J. Coyne encountered this UFO while flying an Army Reserve helicopter on October 18, 1973. (Fortean Picture Library)



children, Charlie and Karen, jumped out while the others rolled down windows and gazed upwards.

They could now see that the red light was attached to an object resembling a blimp with a dome. Apparently the size of a schoolbus, it “went over the top of the other one [the helicopter] and then stopped,” according to the woman.

Charlie recalled, “When we got out of the car, it was right *there*, sitting *there*. . . . It was longways. It was a big old thing. Then the green light flared up. When we got out of the car, everything was green. I saw that thing and the helicopter.” Another child said, “Everything turned green. It lit up everything green. There was a whole bunch of noise [from the helicopter]. I saw the green light for 10 seconds. Not very high. I think the green came from above the helicopter. It kind of looked like rays coming down.”

The helicopter was “just barely ahead and below” the object, Charlie said. “And then the helicopter seemed to pass over us,” without ever deviating from its northeastern course. Another of the children, Curt, described the UFO’s departure thus: “It just flew off and got smaller and smaller toward the northwest,” becoming lost to view behind trees. The UFO had actually taken a zig-zag course, coming in from the east, meeting the helicopter and following it along a north-northeast course before shooting off in a northwestward direction.

In 1988 and 1989 ufologist Jennie Zeidman interviewed a mother and son, Jeanne and John Elias, who told her of their own curious experience late on the evening of October 18, 1973. Mrs. Elias remembered the date because it was her younger son’s birthday and the family had had a party for him that day.

She had gone to bed to watch the 11 o’clock news. Her husband was already asleep. Suddenly she heard loud helicopter sounds. This helicopter seemed so close that—fearing it was about to crash into the house—“I stuck my head under the pillow so if it crashed I could maybe save part of me,” she said.

Just then John, then 14, called her from his room. When she went in to see him, he asked if she had seen the “green light.” She said no, she had had her head under the pillow. John said, “The whole room lit up green.” He had not gotten out of bed to determine its source. The shade of green John Elias described, Zeidman would note, was exactly the shade reported by the other witnesses.

The Eliases’s house was 1.75 miles southwest of the ground witnesses’ location. The incident could not have occurred right over the house, as the Eliases presumed. Apparently the helicopter passed overhead at an estimated 90 knots. At this speed it would have reached the Charles Mill Reservoir bridge site in one minute. The light from the green beam cast here—bright enough to illuminate the entire countryside according to the witnesses on the road—must have been starkly visible even from the Elias residence.





**Investigation and controversy.** Intrigued by a *Cleveland Plain Dealer* account of the helicopter crew's experience, **J. Allen Hynek**, Northwestern University astronomer and longtime scientific consultant for the defunct **Project Blue Book**, met with the witnesses on January 24, 1974, and spent an afternoon and evening reviewing all aspects of the episode with them. Not long afterwards he asked Zeidman, an old and trusted associate, to conduct a thorough investigation.

Zeidman spent many hours interviewing crew members separately and together. Through careful analysis of testimony and a reenactment of the incident with Coyne, she came to the conclusion that the encounter—from Yanacsek's initial observation to the object's disappearance over the western horizon—took "270 to 300 seconds—or 300 seconds, plus or minus 10 percent."

In two books and other writings, debunker Philip J. Klass argued that the crew had seen nothing more than a "meteor/fireball from the Orionids meteor shower." He also claimed that the Huey had been descending at 4000, not 2000, feet per minute. Fearing a collision with the ground, Coyne or Jezzi had "instinctively pulled back on the cyclic pitch control to avoid crashing into the ground." Thus there was nothing mysterious about the ascent.

Nothing in the testimony of the witnesses, air or ground, is in any way consistent with Klass's fantastic identification. Meteors do not last more than a few seconds at most and bear no resemblance to the structured object all the observers reported. Concerning Klass's other allegation, Coyne said, "If we had been diving at 4000 fpm, I would never have been able to recover" in time to stop a crash. At no time, he and other crew members insisted, had they worried about such a crash.

Zeidman easily refuted Klass's various claims, theories, and charges. She pointed out that his interactions with the witnesses consisted in their entirety of two or three phone conversations with Coyne and a talk-show chat, followed by dinner, with Healey.

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## **CRASHES AND RETRIEVALS OF UFOS**

The rumor that government agencies had secretly recovered wreckage and bodies from crashed UFOs began to circulate as early as July 1947, in the wake of an episode that took place in eastern New Mexico. For a few hours radio broadcasts and newspaper headlines all over the world reported the incredible news that remains of a "flying disc" had been picked up on a ranch in Lincoln County—until military spokesmen deflated the story with an announcement that the "disc" was only a misidentified balloon. Nonetheless, some individuals, including several stationed at Roswell Army Air Field (from which the recovery of the alleged balloon was directed), confided to family members or trusted friends that strange bodies had been found at a second crash site near the first one; the two crashes apparently involved a single craft and occurred at about the same time.

For a long time the "Roswell incident," as it is now known, attracted little attention from ufologists. The reconsideration of the Roswell/Corona event began in January 1978, when ufologists William L. Moore and Stanton T. Friedman compared notes from two separate interviews Friedman had conducted. The interviews were with a woman and a man who had been in New Mexico in July 1947 and who knew of the crash of a mysterious craft. The man, a retired Air Force officer, Maj. Jesse A. Marcel, claimed to have been involved in the retrieval of a great quantity of a strange material believed to be the remains of an extraterrestrial vehicle. The woman, Lydia Sleppy, had worked at Albuquerque radio station KOAT and remembered how the military had squelched coverage of a crashed saucer and the bodies of "little men," even to the extent of stopping the transmission of a teletyped news report.

Moore and Friedman linked these accounts with the obscure episode at Roswell and proceeded to look for living witnesses. In 1980 Moore, with popular occult author Charles Berlitz, wrote a premature and sketchy book on his and Friedman's research up till then. Moore and Friedman continued to locate and interview persons who were in some way, directly or indirectly, involved in the episode.



Within five years they had talked with more than 90 persons, one-third of them direct participants. In the late 1980s and early 1990s Donald R. Schmitt and Kevin D. Randle of the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) added considerably to ufologists' knowledge through extensive archival research and interviews with hundreds of persons, ranging from on-site witnesses to Air Force generals. Other investigators, including Thomas J. Carey and Karl T. Pflock, followed in their wake as research continued through the 1990s. All of this led to books, articles, films, videos, and renewed government inquiries (by the General Accounting Office and by the Air Force).

In 1994 the Air Force announced that the wreckage at the site was from the classified Project Mogul, a post-World War II operation in which balloons were sent aloft to monitor possible Soviet atomic tests. Though thought by some to be the solution to the mystery, the theory flew in the face of much of the witness testimony, and the Air Force was unable to produce a document confirming the connection or to link the wreckage with any specific balloon flight; nor could it explain the persistent reports of bodies.

The Roswell debate continues. On June 24, 1997, the Air Force released "The Roswell Report: Case Closed," which contended that the bodies were in fact "anthropomorphic test dummies that were carried aloft by U.S. Air Force high altitude balloons for scientific research"—an assertion that met with considerable skepticism, in part because these experiments did not begin until 1953. The Air Force could only speculate that the witnesses were wrong about the dates of their alleged sightings.

**A hoax and its aftermath.** In August 1949 stories began to circulate in Hollywood to the effect that a soon-to-be-released science-fiction movie, *The Flying Saucer*, would contain actual footage of a spaceship the U.S. government had captured in Alaska. Mikel Conrad, the producer, director, writer, and star, even produced an alleged FBI agent (in fact an actor) to attest to the authenticity of the footage. When an agent of the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) interviewed him, Conrad admitted he had invented the story to publicize his movie.

Not coincidentally, around this time veteran confidence artist Silas Newton was introducing to well-heeled acquaintances a mysterious "Dr. Gee," identified as a world-class scientific authority on magnetics. According to Newton, Gee, who worked on top-secret projects for the U.S. government, had a magnetic device from a crashed flying saucer. With this device he could detect oil deposits. In reality Gee was Leo GeBauer, a swindler with a long arrest record; the flying-saucer story was thrown into what otherwise would have been a routine oil scam to add extra authority to Newton's pitch.

But the UFO angle took on a life of its own when *Variety* columnist Frank Scully published Newton and GeBauer's tale in a best-selling book, *Behind the Flying Saucers* (1950). In 1952, however, *True* magazine commissioned reporter J. P. Cahn to investigate the claims, and Cahn devastatingly exposed the **hoax**.

Nonetheless, the Scully affair led to questions and some extraordinary answers at a Washington meeting, the minutes of which did not come to light until the early 1980s. On September 15, 1950, a group of Canadian government scientists and engineers conferred in the office of Robert I. Sarbacher, a physicist associated with the U.S. Defense Department's Research and Development Board. One of the Canadians, Wilbert B. Smith, said, "I am doing some work on the collapse of the earth's magnetic field as a source of energy, and I think our work may have a bearing on the flying saucers." Smith asked if there was any truth to stories, such as those in Scully's book, about crashed and recovered UFOs. Sarbacher said there was, adding, "We have not been able to duplicate their performance. . . . All we know is, we didn't make them, and it's pretty certain they didn't originate on the earth." But the subject "is classified two points higher even than the H-bomb. In fact it is the most highly classified subject in the U.S. government at the present time." He would say no more.

In the early 1980s Canadian ufologist Arthur Bray found the memo in Smith's files, and subsequently Sarbacher, then living in Florida (he would die in 1986), confirmed to several inquirers that he had said these things. Pleading poor memory, explaining that he had not been personally involved but knew of the events because he was acquainted with the scientists, including President Truman's chief science advisor Vannevar Bush, who worked directly on the problem, Sarbacher was hazy on details. He was not sure where the crashes had occurred, but he remembered that the recovered debris was "extremely light and very tough" (which is how those who saw it described the Corona debris). He said:

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There were reports that instruments or people operating these machines were also of very light weight, sufficient to withstand the tremendous deceleration and acceleration associated with their machinery. I remember in talking with some of the people at the office that I got the impression these "aliens" were constructed like certain insects we have observed on earth, wherein because of the low mass the inertial forces involved in operation of these instruments would be quite low.

If Sarbacher's testimony had been made known in the 1950s, it is likely that ufologists would have been far more willing than they were to take crash claims seriously. But even before Cahn's exposé the Scully book generated little enthusiasm among the more sober early ufologists, largely because of the book's manifest lack of documentation—it was clear, for example, that Scully had done little more than transcribe Newton and GeBauer's account and made no attempt to verify it—and also because of the story's almost comically pseudoscientific overtones.

In its January 9, 1950, issue *Time* took sneering note of Scully's story as well as others about extraterrestrial wreckage and bodies. There was even a story afloat about *living* aliens, *Time* reported. As this one had it, aliens who had survived crashes were being kept alive in special rooms laced with carbon dioxide. Using sign language and drawings, the captives indicated that they came from Venus.



As rumors continued to circulate, ufologists responded to them in print from time to time. In 1952 Ed Sullivan of the Los Angeles-based Civilian Saucer Investigation (CSI) wrote that “we do not believe that any facts are in anyone’s possession to support such claims.” In CSI’s view such stories

are damned for the simple reason, that after years of circulation, not one soul has come forward with a single concrete fact to support the assertions. If there were one single iota of fact, certainly someone, somewhere, would be willing to bring it into the open. . . . We ask you to beware of the man who tells you that his friend knows the man with the pickle jar. There is good reason why he effects [sic] an air of mystery, why he “has been sworn to secrecy”—because he can’t produce the friend—or the pickle jar.

If Sullivan/CSI’s sentiments were an understandable response to a notorious hoax and to fantastic tales that may have seemed then to be no more than carbon copies of it, it would turn out to be the wrong response. By the time serious investigators were willing to reconsider the crash question, nearly three decades later, many potential witnesses to seemingly intriguing cases, notably the Roswell incident but arguably others from the early 1950s, would be dead or untraceable. Yet even ufologists such as **Donald E. Keyhoe** who were convinced the Air Force was hiding significant UFO secrets paid crash tales no heed.

**Other early crash/retrieval lore.** In a 1950 monograph published by the occult-oriented Borderland Sciences Research Associates, N. Meade Layne, who held that UFOs were supernatural phenomena, stated matter-of-factly:

In spite of a policy and an unofficial censorship, it is widely believed by this time that a number of ether ships of the disk type have landed in the United States, through accident of some kind. We have no reports that any of the “dwarf” occupants survived the landing, and we are told that the propulsion and control of these craft is very much of a puzzle to scientists who have inspected them. They are said to be without motors, propellers, or anything recognizable as a drive mechanism. This suggests, of course, some kind of magnetic propulsion. And the performance of these crafts, their extraordinary speed, power and maneuverability, far outclasses anything our own engineers have been able to achieve.

Several anecdotes told of crashes in Mexico. In 1949, for example, the *Los Angeles Free Press* interviewed Alma Lawson, identified as a local businesswoman, concerning an incredible tale she allegedly heard from a “sober and conservative”—but unnamed—scientist friend. An intact flying saucer had gone down in a mesa deep in Mexico’s Sierra Madre. Inside it were the burned bodies of six occupants, humanlike in appearance but none taller than 30 inches. Soon afterwards Lawson’s scientist friend, accompanied by several University of California physicists, visited the site. The UFO, 100 feet in diameter and turtle-shaped with “a diri-



gible-like suspended cabin about 15 feet long," was composed of a brownish metal "so hard a hacksaw could not cut it."

The Oak Ridge, Tennessee, newspaper of September 18, 1950, recounted the alleged experience of NEPA employee Dave T. Keating. Two years earlier, so his story went, he had been flying with the 166th Fighter Squadron, Ohio National Guard, out of Lockburn. While executing a flip of his P-51 at 18,000 feet, he said, "I noticed something that looked like a silver dollar zoom past my plane under me." Upside down at the moment, he was looking up to see it. The moment he came out of his loop, he set out in pursuit of the UFO, some 8000 feet below him. He reduced his own altitude until he was level with it and as close as 80 yards—"as close as I wanted to be." He went on, "I would say the saucer was about 40 feet in diameter and about six feet thick. It had no jet exhausts, no prop, no markings." It did, however, have a thick vertical stabilizer rudder on the end. Coming out of the middle of it was an elliptical object that on its cross surface resembled a smooth manhole cover. The UFO looked as if it were made of aluminum.

For a time Keating chased it at 325 mph but then dropped behind as he saw the object slow down. Thinking it might land or crash, he continued to follow it as it gradually lost altitude. He kept flying even after the UFO was lost to view. "About 10 miles south of the Ohio River," he claimed, "I spotted a litter on a hillside and a path that had obviously been ripped up by a crashing plane or as it may have been a crashing saucer."

Short on fuel, Keating returned to Lockburn. His story was greeted with derision, but eventually he persuaded his major to go with him to the crash scene.

## CRASHES AND RETRIEVALS OF UFOS

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Artist Michael Buhler's depiction of an alleged UFO retrieval by government troops at San Augustin Flats, New Mexico, on July 3, 1947. (Fortean Picture Library)



"Before we left," Keating said, "we found there had been no plane crashes reported in the area." The two flew over the scene, then notified Wright Field. A truck was dispatched from that Air Force base to retrieve the remains. "I was then interviewed by the colonel for about 40 minutes," Keating recalled. "He didn't tell me to keep the thing quiet. As a matter of fact, he didn't give me any instructions." Keating heard nothing more about the incident.

On the morning of July 15, 1952, in the wake of a dramatic encounter with UFOs over Norfolk, Virginia (see **Nash-Fortenberry Sighting**), **Project Blue Book** investigators interviewed the two principal witnesses, pilot William Nash and co-pilot William Fortenberry. Prior to the interview Nash and Fortenberry agreed to ask the Air Force men if there was any truth to persistent rumors about one or more crashed discs in custody at Wright Field. But when the two were interviewed separately, in the excitement Nash forgot to raise the issue. According to Nash, however, Fortenberry did not, and one of the investigators replied, "Yes, it is true." When the two pilots and the investigators met together, Nash suddenly remembered what he had intended to ask. In a written account Nash recalled, "They all opened their mouths to answer the question, whereupon Maj. [John H.] Sharp[e] looked at them, not me, and said very quickly, 'NO!' It appeared as if he were telling them to shut up rather than addressing the answer to me."

Later Nash appeared on a show on radio station WJZ in New York City, where he was to debate three scientists convinced of the nonexistence of UFOs. Before the show started, he wandered into the hallway to get a drink of water. He was unable to find a fountain until he met a man who seemed to know his way around and who led him via a complicated route to his destination. According to Nash:

From his voice timbre he might have been a commentator, but he said that he could not identify himself, even though I specifically asked for his name. He was about 6'1", 200 lbs., intelligent in appearance. He told me that he had just returned from Washington, and had been given the whole story, said the flurry of sightings over Washington [see **Washington National Radar/Visual Case**] was due to Air Force operation of a radio that had been found in a saucer. . . . He said the Wright Field story (about having a saucer) was true; that he and a New England reporter, along with a *Life* reporter, had just been briefed, but were told to keep it quiet until they were given permission to break the story. He appeared quite excited and sincere. He would not or could not tell me if the radios they found would send only a carrier wave signal, or if words were transmitted.

When Nash spoke to the Greater Miami Aviation Association in February 1954, he was asked why he thought the Air Force was withholding UFO information. In his reply he speculated that a statement attesting to extraterrestrial visitation would be followed by a demand for proof. If that proof consisted, as Nash suspected, of hardware, the Air Force would be reluctant to produce it, since then Soviet agents would know of its existence and do everything they could to learn its

secrets. One month later the Air Force issued a heated denial that it possessed such evidence or that it deemed UFOs anything out of the ordinary.

On May 23, 1955, popular newspaper columnist Dorothy Kilgallen wrote: "I can report today on a story which is positively spooky, not to mention chilling. British scientists and airmen after examining the wreckage of one mysterious flying ship are convinced that these strange aerial objects are not optical illusions or Soviet inventions, but are actual flying saucers which originate on another planet." Her source, she said, was a "British official of cabinet rank who prefers to remain unidentified." Kilgallen had no more, then or later, to say on the subject, and nothing has surfaced in the years since to substantiate it. Gordon Creighton, a retired British foreign officer and editor of *Flying Saucer Review*, has claimed that Kilgallen got the story at a May 1955 cocktail party hosted by Lord Mountbatten; at least one of the crashes, she was told according to Creighton, took place during World War II. Mountbatten's private secretary at the time, Mollie Travis, denies this claim, according to Timothy Good, who has written extensively on the British government's involvement in UFO investigation.

Isabel L. Davis, among the most intelligent and critical-minded of the first-generation ufologists, could not help being intrigued when an acquaintance, a medical doctor and physiologist, related what she said was an experience she had in the late 1950s. The doctor had been taken to a secure facility, given special clothing, and directed to study portions of bodies that she quickly recognized as humanlike but not human. Her supervisors told her nothing about what these beings were or how they came to be there. After her work was completed, her clothes were returned, and she was ordered not to talk about the incident—which was hardly necessary, she remarked to Davis, since no one would have believed her anyway.

**The Las Vegas case.** An unusually evidential case occurred on April 18, 1962, in Nevada and Utah. There can be no question that it happened; numerous witnesses and a radar tracking attested to the passage of an unusual flying object. Reporters interviewed witnesses, as did the Air Force (which also conducted a desert search for the object) and—years later—ufologist Kevin Randle. Project Blue Book officially explained the object as a bolide, but aspects of the incident belie this interpretation.

The episode apparently began with a sighting of a westward-moving glowing red object over Oneida, New York. The original observers saw it for no more than a few seconds. Though this certainly sounds like a meteor, the object began to be picked up on radar as it headed through the Midwest into the Southwest. The Air Defense Command alerted bases along the object's trajectory. At least one of them, Luke Air Force Base near Phoenix, sent interceptors after it. When the UFO passed over Nephi, Utah, observers on the ground heard the rumble of jet engines in its wake.

At Eureka, Utah, the object was seen to land. The witness described the UFO as a glowing orange-red oval that emitted a low whirring sound. At the same time electrical service from a nearby power plant was disrupted. The object then rose



and headed west toward Nevada. It swept toward the south, and radar lost it east of Las Vegas. Witnesses said the object, which looked like a "tremendous flashing sword," vanished in a red explosion in the direction of Mesquite, Nevada, according to a headline story in the April 19 issue of the *Las Vegas Sun*.

In a terse summary Blue Book files confirm a radar tracking at Nellis AFB in Nevada:

Radar sighting. Speed of object varied. Initial observation at 060, no elevation. Disappearance at 105 [degrees] az[imuth at] 10,000 feet altitude. Heading tentatively NE, however disappeared instantly to S. Observed by search and height radars. No visual.

These last two words are misleading. Apparently they mean that the personnel attending the radar did not see the object. The change in speed is further indication that the object was not a meteor. Blue Book further noted:

Obj. came in over Cuba and apparently landed in rough terrain West of Eureka, Utah. Bright enough to trip photo electric cell which controlled city street lights.

Air Force Capt. Herman Gordon Shields provided this testimony in an interview conducted at Hill AFB:

I was flying a C-119 aircraft from the left seat [captain's seat]. We were approximately two miles west of La Van, Utah[,] flying 8500 feet MSL. Our true airspeed was a little less than 170 knots. We were making a right turn from a heading of about 068 degrees to 165 degrees. We were approximately 25 degrees of bank on the aircraft and we had turned for about 30 degrees to a heading of about 098 or 100 degrees, somewhere in there, when it began to get very bright in the cockpit.

The illumination was from above. It built up slowly. My first impression while the intensity was low was that it was the landing lights of another aircraft. Of course, when the intensity increased this was ruled out automatically. The cockpit was illuminated from above. In the C-119 aircraft there is an instrument panel in the middle of the cockpit up above on the ceiling of the cockpit. The light source was coming from this area that was blanked out, in other words, straight behind this instrument panel because neither Lieutenant Larson, who was in the right seat[,] nor I saw the source of the illumination.

We continued the turn. The light intensity increased until we could see objects [on the ground] as bright as day for a radius of five to ten miles from the aircraft. This would probably be a diameter of twenty miles or so. Objects on the ground, on the hills around us, were clearly distinguishable. Colors were distinguishable. It was as bright as daylight. The intensity of the light diminished faster than it had increased. After the light had decreased in intensity we were still looking for the light

source, and I noticed an object to my left between the wing and the lower part of the fuselage of the aircraft against the hills.

By this time the light had decreased so that the hills were dark. It was night again. And this object which I saw was illuminated. It had a long slender appearance comparable to a cigarette in size, that is, the diameter with respect to the length of the object. The fore part, or the lower part of the object, was very bright, intense white such as a magnesium fire. The second half, the aft section, was a clearly distinguishable yellowish color. I would say the object was just about divided in half, the fore part being intensely white, the aft section having a more yellow color to it. . . .

I saw only a slender object. I don't know what the shape was. . . . There was no exhaust, no trail following after it. It was clearly defined. I saw it for a period of maybe one to two seconds.

Military interviews of civilian witnesses filled a single-spaced, seven-page report. A number mentioned that even after it was no longer visible, they heard booms in the sky and saw a trail of gray smoke. According to one witness:

As the object passed over Robinson [Utah], it slowed down in [the] air, and after, [a] gasping sound was heard, the object spurted ahead again. After this procedure was repeated three or four times, the object arched over and began descending to earth after which the object turned bluish color and then burned out or went dark. After the object began to slow down it began to wobble or "fishtail" in its path.

Douglas M. Crouch, head of Hill AFB's criminal-investigation division, concluded:

Preliminary analysis indicates that each of the observers interviewed were [sic] logical, mature persons, and that each person was convinced that he had observed some tangible object, not identifiable as a balloon or conventional type aircraft. The theory that the object was a manned aircraft was abandoned due to the described shape and color and flaming tail of the object, plus the fact there are no reports of missing aircraft in this area. No unusual meteorological or astronomical conditions were present which would furnish an explanation for the sighting. No missile test firings are conducted in the immediate area other than static tests. The hypothesis that the object was a falling meteor is questioned due to the statements of three observers describing the flat trajectory, plus the description of sounds emanating from the object. Due to the inaccessibility of the valley, ten miles wide by 15 miles long in which the object apparently came to earth, no further search for the object is contemplated. With the completion of this initial report, no explanation has been developed for the brilliant illumination of the area, the object itself, or the explosion in the wake of the object.



A search-and-rescue party led by Clark County Deputy Sheriff Walter Butt headed in jeeps into the Spring Mountain, Nevada, area. Though the search continued all night and at one point aircraft were brought in, nothing was found. Then, Crouch's recommendations notwithstanding, the Air Force did conduct a search on May 8, flying Blue Book director Lt. Col. Robert Friend and its scientific consultant, astronomer **J. Allen Hynek**, to the area. Accompanied by Crouch, they interviewed witnesses in central Utah over a one-day period. At the end of it, the two had persuaded Crouch that a bolide was responsible for the sighting.

In fact, the object could have been no such thing. When seen over Reno, it was heading from west to east. Over Utah witnesses insisted without exception that it was moving southeast to northwest. It had changed direction, in other words, indicating that it was under intelligent control. Randle collected witness accounts from, among others, Sheriff Raymond Jackson of Nephi. Jackson heard a roar, looked up, saw a westbound yellow-white flame, and heard booming sounds. At that moment all the town's lights went out temporarily.

At both Eureka and Reno the UFO was seen under two aircraft by those aboard them. As Randle remarks, "Coupled with the testimony of three witnesses in Utah who said the object was about five hundred feet above them, [the aircraft sightings] tended to rule out the bolide theory because the meteor would have been too low for too long." Moreover, according to a statement made to the press by a Nellis AFB spokesman, radar would not have tracked a meteor. At best it would have picked up, briefly, its ionized trail, and that would not have appeared as a single moving point.

The front page of the *Roswell Daily Record* on July 8, 1947, trumpets the retrieval of a UFO in the vicinity. (Fortean Picture Library)

Leased Wire  
Associated Press

**Roswell Daily Record**

WEDNESDAY, JULY 9, 1947  
ROSWELL, NEW MEXICO  
TUESDAY, JULY 8, 1947  
14 PER COPY

## RAAF Captures Flying Saucer On Ranch in Roswell Region

No Details of Flying Disk Are Revealed

Roswell Hardware Man and Wife Report Disk Seen

The Roswell Hardware Store, owned by Mr. and Mrs. A. M. Wooten, reported that it had seen a flying saucer on its premises. The store is located on the main highway between Roswell and Lordsburg. The Wootens said they saw the object on the night of July 7, 1947. It was a bright, glowing disk, about the size of a dinner plate, and it was moving very fast. It was seen by both Mr. and Mrs. Wooten, and they were sure of what they saw. They said they saw it for about 10 minutes, and it was in the sky for about 15 minutes. They said they saw it in the sky for about 15 minutes, and it was in the sky for about 15 minutes. They said they saw it in the sky for about 15 minutes, and it was in the sky for about 15 minutes.

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### Movies as Usual

**GRAND**

THE SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER

THE FLYING SAUCERS

### Claims Army Is Stacking Courts Martial

Indiana Senator Lays Protest Before Patterson

Washington, July 8 (AP)—The House today passed a bill to limit the number of courts martial in the Army. The bill was passed by a vote of 300 to 100. It was introduced by Rep. Charles McNary, D-Ind. McNary said the bill was necessary to prevent the Army from stacking the courts with cases against soldiers. He said the bill would limit the number of courts martial to 100 a year. McNary said the bill would also limit the number of soldiers who could be tried in courts martial. He said the bill would also limit the number of soldiers who could be tried in courts martial. He said the bill would also limit the number of soldiers who could be tried in courts martial.

### House Passes Tax Slash by Large Margin

Defeat Amendment By Demos to Remove Many from Rolls

Washington, July 8 (AP)—The House today passed a bill to slash taxes by a large margin. The bill was passed by a vote of 300 to 100. It was introduced by Rep. Charles McNary, D-Ind. McNary said the bill was necessary to prevent the Army from stacking the courts with cases against soldiers. He said the bill would limit the number of courts martial to 100 a year. McNary said the bill would also limit the number of soldiers who could be tried in courts martial. He said the bill would also limit the number of soldiers who could be tried in courts martial. He said the bill would also limit the number of soldiers who could be tried in courts martial.

### Some of Soviet Satellites May Attend Paris Meeting

Paris, July 8 (AP)—The Soviet Union today announced that some of its satellites might attend a meeting in Paris. The meeting was to be held on July 10, 1947. The Soviet Union said it was interested in the meeting. It said it was interested in the meeting. It said it was interested in the meeting. It said it was interested in the meeting. It said it was interested in the meeting.

### Roswellians Have Differing Opinions On Flying Saucers

Roswell, N.M., July 8 (AP)—The people of Roswell today expressed differing opinions on the flying saucer sighting. Some said they were sure of what they saw. Others said they were not sure. Still others said they were not interested. The people of Roswell today expressed differing opinions on the flying saucer sighting. Some said they were sure of what they saw. Others said they were not sure. Still others said they were not interested. The people of Roswell today expressed differing opinions on the flying saucer sighting. Some said they were sure of what they saw. Others said they were not sure. Still others said they were not interested.

### American League Wins All-Star Game

Chicago, July 8 (AP)—The American League today won the All-Star game. The game was played between the American League and the National League. The American League won by a score of 7 to 3. The game was played at the Chicago Stadium. The American League won by a score of 7 to 3. The game was played at the Chicago Stadium. The American League won by a score of 7 to 3. The game was played at the Chicago Stadium.

### Ex-King Carol Weds Mme. Lupescu

Paris, July 8 (AP)—King Carol II of Romania today married his second wife, Mme. Lupescu. The wedding was held in Paris. King Carol II of Romania today married his second wife, Mme. Lupescu. The wedding was held in Paris. King Carol II of Romania today married his second wife, Mme. Lupescu. The wedding was held in Paris.

### Miners and Operators Sign Highest Wage Pact in History

Washington, July 8 (AP)—The United Mine Workers today signed the highest wage pact in the history of the industry. The pact was signed with the National Bituminous Coal Operators Association. The pact was signed in Washington. The United Mine Workers today signed the highest wage pact in the history of the industry. The pact was signed with the National Bituminous Coal Operators Association. The pact was signed in Washington.



In the Air Force file on the case, Randle found this assessment by an unidentified intelligence officer:

On April 18, 1962, the Air Force Defense Command was puzzled by an aerial object that exploded and seemed to be a meteor, but had the unique distinction of being tracked by radar 70 miles northwest of Las Vegas, Nevada[,] in a blinding flash. An Air Force Defense Command alert reported the object was tracked and traced over New York, Kansas, Utah, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Wyoming, Arizona and California, so that its light covered almost as much area as that created by the big hydrogen space bomb test held later in the Pacific hundreds of miles high.

The UFO, which crossed several time zones in its flight across much of the continent, was in view for approximately 32 minutes, the incident ending around 7:30 p.m. Las Vegas time. As Randle observes, this was "much too long for a meteor. A meteor would cross the United States much faster. And it means that the object, whatever it was, was not a meteor."

Randle, the only ufologist to conduct a serious inquiry, interviewed witnesses, collected press reports, and uncovered Air Force documents in the late 1980s. In the course of his investigation, he received a letter from a man who asked to remain anonymous. The correspondent, who claimed to have been an officer stationed at Nellis AFB when the incident happened, said he and 30 fellow officers were driven into the desert early the following morning. There, using flashlights, they were directed to clean a debris-filled field. As the day dawned, they were loaded into a bus where windows were blacked out with dark paper. One piece of paper, however, did not entirely cover the window, and the correspondent glimpsed quickly through it to see a damaged saucer-shaped machine. This is the only known allegation of a retrieval of remains from the UFO's descent, and unless independent confirmation comes to light, it must be viewed with skepticism. On the other hand, if something did indeed crash, presumably it left some evidence of its fate.

**Retrieval in Arizona?** An interesting but flawed crash/retrieval story came to the attention of prominent ufologist Raymond E. Fowler in 1973. Fowler learned that two years earlier the Framingham, Massachusetts, edition of the *Middlesex News* had interviewed Jeff Young, a boy who was writing a book on UFOs for youthful readers. In the resulting article the boy said he had spoken with a man who, while working as a Project Blue Book consultant, participated in the recovery of a crashed UFO.

Fowler contacted the young man and learned further details. The man—to whom Fowler subsequently would assign the pseudonym "Fritz Werner"—said he had been an engineer in the Office of Special Studies of what was then the Air Force's Air Materiel Command Installations Division at Wright-Patterson AFB. Later he designed landing gear and alighting devices at the Aircraft Laboratory at Wright Air Development Center. For a while Werner was on temporary assignment



with the Atomic Energy Commission at the Atomic Proving Ground in Nevada. Once, he told Young and the latter's friend Paul Chetham, he and some associates had had a UFO sighting during an atomic test. He had experienced another while in Thule, Greenland.

Werner further claimed that in 1954 (or 1953, as he would revise the date in subsequent testimony), when he was back at Wright-Patterson, he received a call from the base commander instructing him to fly to Chicago, then on to Phoenix, to investigate a crashed UFO. Werner said the UFO looked like a "teardrop-shaped cigar" made of a dull material. While at the site, he caught a glimpse of the body of the alien occupant, four feet tall and humanoid, lying in a tent.

As if this were not already fantastic enough, Werner went on to state that he later had actual contact with UFO beings.

When Fowler interviewed Werner, he heard a story that was different in some particulars. For example, Werner now said the incident had happened while he was assigned to the Frenchman Flats area of Nevada. The evening before—May 20, 1953—Dr. Ed Doll, his superior, ordered him to report for special duty the next day. He was driven to nearby Indian Springs AFB and with 15 other specialists put on a military plane and flown to Phoenix. The passengers were not allowed to speak with one another.

At Phoenix they boarded a bus with other personnel and rode for about four hours. Because the windows were blacked out, the passengers could not tell where they were going. The only explanation they got was from an Air Force colonel who said a supersecret Air Force vehicle had crashed and the specialists were to study it from the perspectives of their respective disciplines.

When the bus stopped, the men were summoned by name one at a time and escorted to the site, which Werner thought he recognized as being near Kingman, Arizona, not far from the proving grounds where Werner was working. Apparently the trip to Phoenix and back was part of an elaborate ruse to keep the participants from knowing the location of the incident.

The object, heavily guarded and illuminated by two brilliant spotlights, was oval-shaped and 30 feet in diameter. As he expressed it in an affidavit he prepared for Fowler, it looked like

two deep saucers, one inverted upon the other. . . . My particular job was to determine, from the angle and depth of impact into the sand, how fast the vehicle's forward and vertical velocities were at the time of impact. . . . Questions having nothing to do with our own special areas were not answered.

An armed military policeman guarded a tent pitched nearby. I managed to glance inside at one point and saw the dead body of a four-foot, humanlike creature in a silver metallic-looking suit. The skin on its

face was dark brown. This may have been caused by exposure to our atmosphere. . . .

As soon as each person finished his task, he was interviewed over a tape recorder and escorted back to the bus. On the way back . . . I managed to talk with someone else going back to it at the same time. He told me that he had glanced inside the object and saw two swivel-like seats, as well as instruments and displays. An airman, who noticed we were talking, separated us and warned us not to talk with each other.

After we all returned to the bus, the Air Force colonel who was in charge had us raise our right hands and take an oath not to reveal what we had experienced. I was instructed to write my report in longhand and not to type or reproduce it. A telephone number was given me to call when the report was complete. I called the number and an airman picked up the report.

Werner showed Fowler an old calendar diary that contained an entry marked May 20, 1953. It read in part, "Got a funny call from Dr. Doll at 10. I'm going on a special job tomorrow." The next day: "Got picked up at Indian Springs AFB at 4:30 p.m. for a job I can't write or talk about." In Fowler's estimation the paper and ink looked "aged."

Fowler was prepared to dismiss the obvious inconsistencies as derived mostly from "memory lapses." He noted Werner's academic background—two bachelor's degrees in mathematics and physics and a master's in engineering—and positive character references from former employers and professional associates. Through the Atomic Energy Commission, Fowler confirmed the dates and names of the tests Werner had mentioned. In *Casebook of a UFO Investigator* (1981) Fowler essentially endorses the claim and glosses over credibility problems he had earlier discussed more frankly in a private report prepared for the **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP).

At one point Fowler had questioned Werner about his conflicting descriptions of the crashed UFO. In his report to NICAP, Fowler wrote:

[T]he witness appeared flustered for the first time and said that he had described the object he had seen over Thule, Greenland, to the boys. I reminded him that he had described the Thule sighting to me as having been a black disc seen at a distance. He started to insist until I produced the copy of the transcript, which clearly indicated that he had described the crashed object, not the Thule object, to the boys. At that point, he backed down and admitted that he had lied to the boys. He said that the description given me was accurate because I was really conducting a serious investigation into the matter. In my opinion, this is the most significant and damaging contradiction without a completely adequate explanation.



Werner said he had been drinking when Young and Chetham interviewed him. When he drank, he explained, he exaggerated things. He had been under the influence of four martinis, he said. When Fowler checked with the boys, they said they had seen Werner consume one beer in the course of the interview. It is possible, of course, that Werner drank the martinis *before* the boys showed up, but nothing about this aspect of the story inspires confidence.

Equally disquieting is the undeniable similarity Werner's story bears to elements of Scully's discredited *Behind the Flying Saucers*. Consider these "coincidences":

(1) Two of Scully's fictitious crashed saucers came down near proving grounds in the Southwest. Werner's saucer did, too.

(2) In one of Scully's cases researchers were dispatched from Phoenix to study the vehicle. So were the specialists in Werner's story.

(3) Scully's saucers appeared to be composed of an aluminumlike substance, as did Werner's.

(4) Inside one of Scully's craft were two "bucket seats" in front of an instrument panel. Inside Werner's were two "swivel seats" in front of "instruments and displays."

(5) The skin of Scully's humanoids was "charred a very dark chocolate color . . . [apparently] as a result of [terrestrial] air rushing through that broken port-hole window." Werner's humanoid's skin was "dark brown. This may have been caused by exposure to our atmosphere."

Had Werner read Scully? It is hard not to suspect as much. Kevin Randle also cites the story's curious portrayal of security procedures. Why, after the occupants of the bus were ordered not to speak with one another, would an officer call out their names once the bus reached its destination? Such an action "would provide those involved with a way of learning more about the assignment after they were returned to their regular duties because they had the names of others on the bus." Randle, a former Air Force intelligence officer, characterizes this as a "major breach" in security.

Randle also wonders why Werner "would note in his unclassified desk calendar that he was involved in a special project." But even if authentic, the entries do not specifically mention a UFO-related project. A man working in sensitive areas, as Werner is supposed to have done, surely must have participated in a number of jobs he "can't write or talk about."

Fowler was able to establish that Ed Doll existed and that he had been employed by the Atomic Energy Commission. Fowler's effort to locate him, however, were unavailing. William Moore, who interviewed him in California on October 9, 1981, had better luck. When he asked Doll about the incident, Doll denied knowing anything about it. Questioned about Werner (whose real name Moore knew and mentioned), Doll replied that he had never heard of him. Two former Blue Book heads said the same thing.

A case for the Werner story can be made, even if only shakily. Why, one may ask, would a liar have mentioned Doll's name, knowing that he could deny the story (as indeed he did)? An advocate would further argue that Doll's denial is only to be expected; after all, he may have taken his security oath more seriously than Werner seems to have done. Moreover, other persons have spoken of what may be the same event.

One of these was an individual identified only as "an Air Force Major, named Daly . . . a metallurgist stationed at Wright-Patterson AFB in 1953." Daly was a friend to the father of Charles Wilhelm, a Cincinnati UFO enthusiast. In 1968 Daly told the senior Wilhelm that in April 1953 he was flown blindfolded to a "hot and sandy" area. Once there, he spent two days examining a metallic disc-shaped craft 25 to 30 feet in diameter. Perhaps, assuming for the sake of argument that the Daly and Werner stories are true in some sense, Daly's memory of the month is slightly off.

Another story came from a woman named Judy Woolcott. In 1965, she told ufologist Donald Schmitt, she got a letter from her husband, a professional military officer serving in Vietnam, a week before he was killed in action. Unfortunately, sometime before she met Schmitt a dozen years later, she misplaced the letter and thus was forced to reconstruct its contents from memory.

Supposedly her late husband had been on duty at an air base control tower in the Southwest when an unidentified object appeared on radar. Soon the object dropped off the screen, and a white light flashed in the distance. Woolcott and other base personnel set out in jeeps and eventually came upon a domed disc, with no apparent external damage, embedded in the sand. But before they could get any closer, a military convoy showed up at the scene, ushered them off the site, and drove them back to the base, where they were sworn to secrecy. Later Woolcott heard talk from military policemen that bodies had been found inside the craft. The crash took place somewhere near Kingman.

Randle heard an interesting story from a woman who had worked in the Parachute Branch at Wright-Patterson in the early 1950s. At some point in 1952 or 1953 (the woman had only a general sense of the time period) a sergeant had entered the office where she worked. He said he had just flown in from the Southwest on a plane carrying the bodies of alien beings recovered in a UFO crash. The woman and her workmates did not believe the story. Within the hour, however, the base commander, Col. C. Pratt Brown, arrived to insist that the sergeant's story was no more than a rumor that should not be repeated. To ensure that it was not repeated, he had everyone sign an official form. The form stated that if they did not keep their silence, they would be subject to a \$20,000 fine and 20 years in jail.

Randle offers this cautionary note:

The problem is clearly that the secretary did not remember the exact time frame or location. To suggest this was part of the Kingman case, we must resort to speculation based on the limited documentation of



her employment experience at Wright-Patterson. The only reported crash that fits into the time frame is the Kingman event, and the connection is very weak.

In 1964 ufologist Richard Hall heard a secondhand account of a 1953 crash in the Arizona desert. His informant, a future Vietnam commander and in Hall's assessment unlikely hoaxter, said his Air Force training officer had informed him of the incident, in which four small bodies were recovered.

After speaking to a group of pilots in Cincinnati in 1977, crash/retrieval investigator Leonard H. Stringfield (see below) was approached by a former Army warrant officer who was now a flight commander in the Air National Guard. The man told Stringfield that one night in 1953, when he was stationed at Wright-Patterson AFB, a DC-7 flew in carrying five crates. From a distance of about 12 feet, Stringfield's informant claimed, he looked inside three of them and observed in each the body of a four-foot-tall humanoid lying on a fabric covering a bed of dry ice. The skin looked brown, and the hairless head was narrow but oversized. The eyes were open. The nose was small, virtually indistinct. One body, which had what the observer took to be breasts, apparently was female. The informant further claimed to have learned from a member of the plane crew that one being had survived the crash but died soon afterwards. The crash allegedly happened in the Arizona desert.

Taken alone, the Werner story has too many problems to merit serious attention. None of the other reports of an alleged mid-1953 crash/retrieval provides anything beyond circumstantial support; the only firsthand account, which in any case exists only as an anecdote, is not itself set at the Arizona site. Yet whatever their inadequacies, it is these other reports that leave the question open. Only other, better evidence—if it exists—will provide the answer.

**Shag Harbor.** Retrievals did not follow necessarily from all crash stories. One such case, a spectacular one involving a number of witnesses, took place in Nova Scotia in the early fall of 1967. Beginning in late September, a number of Nova Scotians reported nocturnal-light UFOs cavorting through the skies. Then on the evening of October 4, two sightings of a bright orange light, an hour and 100 miles apart, took place. The first was at Dartmouth, the second near Bear Point at Nova Scotia's southern extremity. In this latter instance two men in a car heading toward Shag Harbor spotted an orange light first; suddenly two more lights joined it, and the three formed a 45-degree angle in the sky, with the first at the lowest point. A few minutes later five occupants of a second car at Shag Harbor spotted four objects—apparently the three joined by yet one more—moving in a horizontal line, flashing on and off in sequence. Then the objects positioned themselves at a 45-degree angle and descended toward the ocean. On making contact with the water, they made a faint whistling or hissing noise.

After parking the car, the five scrambled by foot to the shore. From that position they looked out half a mile to see not four objects but one bobbing on

the waves. One of the witnesses called the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and three officers from the Barrington Passage station arrived 20 minutes later. "I saw a light floating on the water about a half mile offshore," Constable Ron O'Brien told the *Halifax Mail-Star and Chronicle-Herald*. "It was being carried out to sea by the tide and disappeared before we could get a boat to it."

A Canadian Coast Guard lifeboat and eight fishing boats set out from nearby Clark's Harbor and arrived less than an hour later at the spot where the light had been seen. An 80-foot-wide patch of bubbling water and yellowish foam covered the site, suggesting, the observers surmised, that something had submerged there. Capt. Bradford Shand, an experienced Shag Harbor hand, said that he had never seen anything like it.

The following day other witnesses reported their own corroborating sightings of the curious phenomenon to the RCMP. Some said they had seen a dark object, approximately 60 feet long, with a string of lights along its side. It had descended to the surface, floated for a short time, then disappeared into the water. No aircraft were missing.

Navy divers from the H.M.C.S. Granby scoured the ocean bottom, some 40 to 80 feet beneath the surface of that location. Though the floor was sandy and flat and the visibility was good, the search proved fruitless, even when other divers joined in and the area under scrutiny was expanded. The search was terminated on October 8. Three nights later several witnesses reported seeing the same or similar lights, stretching about 60 feet from end light to end light at 500 to 600 feet altitude and three-quarters of a mile offshore. After hovering for seven or eight minutes, they disappeared. Four reappeared soon afterwards, now positioned at a 35-degree angle, descending toward the horizon and changing from yellow to orange to red before vanishing. An hour later one of the witnesses saw what may have been the same lights, moving "faster than any plane."

The incident was investigated by Norman Levine of the **University of Colorado UFO Project**. It is listed as unexplained in the project's final report. In the 1990s Nova Scotia ufologists Chris Styles and Don Ledger conducted a great deal of research on the case, collecting documents and interviewing witnesses. In the course of their inquiries, Styles and Ledger learned of a whole new dimension to the case. Their sources were divers and military personnel who had participated in the retrieval effort.

According to this extraordinary (and unverified) story, the searchers realized at some point that the UFO had made its way a few miles to the north-northeast, placing it on a seabed off Shelburne County's Government Point, close to a top-secret (now closed) submarine-detection base run jointly by Canada and the United States. A flotilla of ships positioned itself over the submerged craft. As the crews gave consideration to a recovery effort, a second underwater UFO joined the first and engaged in a repair operation. The ships decided then to do no more than observe the proceedings.



Seven days later a Soviet submarine appeared but was escorted from the site. Soon afterwards the two UFOs sailed off toward the Gulf of Maine. Emerging from under water, they ascended rapidly and flew off at a high rate of speed.

**Stringfield and the new era.** The first major mainstream ufologist to declare crash/retrieval reports a matter of legitimate concern, even vital interest, was Leonard Stringfield, a widely respected figure whose history in the UFO field went back to the early 1950s. His advocacy of crash/retrievals would have enormous impact on ufology's subsequent direction. In the 1980s and 1990s crash/retrieval investigations and attendant controversies would stand at the forefront of UFO research.

Stringfield first declared himself in a 1977 book, *Situation Red, the UFO Siege!*, which sought to revive both the **extraterrestrial hypothesis** of UFO origin (a notion that had largely fallen out of favor among many ufologists) and the idea of an official cover-up (also judged passé). In doing so, he marshaled the usual evidence familiar to readers of 1950s UFO books, such as those by Donald Keyhoe. Less predictably, he dedicated 10 pages to crashed-disc stories.

One concerned the remarkable testimony of a Presbyterian minister. When he was a boy, he and his father, also a minister, were visiting Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry when they got lost in a labyrinth of corridors. Trying to find an exit, they entered a room with a large, glass-covered case. Inside the case they were startled to see a number of preserved bodies of small humanoid beings. At that moment they were discovered, and the father was taken into another room, where he was detained and forced to sign papers swearing him to silence.

The treatment here afforded crash/retrievals would set a pattern Stringfield followed until death ended his career as a collector of this variety of modern folklore. He collected and reported incredible tales, usually from anonymous informants. This practice, which he defended as essential to the protection of his sources, generated considerable criticism. No one questioned Stringfield's honesty, but some wondered about his judgment. If the identities of his sources were kept from other investigators, no independent assessment was possible. No one could accuse Stringfield of excessive skepticism; to the contrary, his critics complained that he was inclined to take at face value even wild claims, providing that the source appeared sincere enough.

To such criticisms Stringfield countered:

I wish to emphasize that most of my firsthand sources just don't seem to fit the psychotic or weirdo types. Most, working initially through an intermediary, have shown a reluctance to talk too much until I assured them of anonymity and confidential treatment on other details relative to military or personal matters.

Notably, almost all sources indicated no inclination to take an active part in UFO research for fame or fortune, either because they were

fearful of reprisals based on their secrecy oath, or the desire for privacy for business or family reasons. Interestingly, most were not sufficiently attuned to the subject of UFOs to even keep up with the current literature.

Nonetheless, some of his informants proved to be hoaxers, including a man whose tape-recorded testimony was highlighted at Stringfield's well-attended lecture on July 29, 1978, in Dayton, Ohio, at a Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) conference. The claimant's testimony was exposed as dubious only after other researchers learned of his identity and launched their own investigations.

Beyond what little could be determined with reasonable certainty about the credibility of individual informants, how one felt about the stories Stringfield was collecting had a great deal to do with how one felt about crash/retrievals. If one considered such things possible, one found the testimony—whatever its undeniable problems (for example, only a minority of informants were, or claimed to be, first-hand sources)—at least suggestive. To those who rejected crash/retrieval claims as absurd, nothing Stringfield brought forth amounted to much as evidence. Indeed, real evidence, in the form of a body of interlocking testimony from a wide range of independent informants, did not come to light until the Roswell investigation, in which Stringfield played only a marginal role.

Here are summaries of several representative cases discussed in the MUFON report:

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A "reliable person in a technical position at a large General Electric plant" heard the story from his brother, a radar specialist at California's Edwards AFB. In 1952 the brother tracked a UFO on radar as it sped across the screen. Soon afterwards word came that it had crashed. The captain ordered him to pretend that he had seen nothing. Later "base officials" informed him that the disc had been recovered in a desert area nearby. The craft was over 50 feet in diameter and contained bodies of humanoids. It was held for a short time in an Edwards hangar, then shipped by truck to Wright-Patterson.

Stringfield had his informant contact his brother, who refused to speak with the ufologist, citing—according to the informant—his security oath. As supporting evidence Stringfield cited testimony from three individuals who said they had seen a tarpaulin-covered "strange cargo," rumored to be a flying saucer, being transported on a lo-boy to Wright-Patterson in 1952.

Possible additional evidence came from yet another source. The parents of ufologist and NASA engineer John Schuessler had a close friend who once had been a civilian guard at a receiving gate for internal security at Wright-Patterson. Sometime in 1952 a lo-boy carrying a tarpaulin-covered craft had arrived. On this or another occasion bodies of humanoids were delivered to the gate. They were said to have been recovered from a crash somewhere in the Southwest. The former guard turned down Schuessler's request for an interview.



In another alleged incident, this one set in Montana in 1953, Stringfield had an informant who claimed firsthand status. Cecil Tenney, 78, said that in the fall of that year, near dusk, he had been driving from Great Falls to Conrad when, close to Dutton, he saw a cigar-shaped object about 200 feet away. Apparently in trouble, it shook and belched fire and smoke. "It seemed to be trying to pull itself up," Tenney said, "but it couldn't." After a few minutes he heard an explosion, and balls of fire rained down from the sky.

Tenney repaired to an area bar, where a highway patrol officer and fellow witness got his name and address. That evening a colonel from Great Falls AFB called and gruffly instructed him to show up at the installation the following morning. When he arrived, two guards escorted him to a jail-like building and then to the colonel's office. After a 30-minute interrogation Tenney signed five copies of a document with a notary seal. On his way out the door, still accompanied by guards, he passed two guards carrying what he first took to be laundry bags. Suddenly one dropped his bag, and Tenney thought he could see the outline of a body with limbs. At that moment he was roughly shoved outside. "I can't swear they were bodies," Tenney told Stringfield, "but the bags contained something they didn't want me to see." His phone voice "sounded convincing," in Stringfield's judgment.

In July 1979, a year after the MUFON lecture, Stringfield received a typed statement from a source with whom he had been interacting for some months, mostly through an intermediary, a physician who "served on the staff of a major hospital." The composer of the statement was identified only as a "noted doctor . . . who had performed the autopsy" of an alien body in the early 1950s. He was, according to Stringfield, one of several "medical people" who were providing him with information on extraterrestrial physiology. The statement read in part:

SIZE—The specimen observed was 4 foot three and three-eighths inches in length. I can't remember the weight. It has been so long and my files do not contain the weight. I recall the length well, because we had a disagreement and everyone took their turn at measuring.

HEAD—The head was pear-shaped in appearance and oversized by human standards for the body. The eyes were Mongoloid in appearance. The ends of the eyes furthest from the nasal cavity slanted upward at about a ten degree angle. The eyes were recessed into the head. There seemed to be no visible eyelids, only what seemed like a fold. There were no human type lips as such—just a slit that opened into an oral cavity about two inches deep. A membrane along the rear of the cavity separated it from what would be the digestive tract. The tongue seemed to be atrophied into almost a membrane. No teeth were observed. X-rays revealed a maxilla and mandible as well as cranial bone structure. The outer "ear lobes" didn't exist. The auditory orifices present were similar to our middle and inner ear canals. The head con-

tained no hair follicles. The skin seemed grayish in color and seemed mobile when moved.

The above observations are from general anatomical observations. I didn't autopsy or study the head portion in any great detail since this was not my area of specialty. . . .

The arms are oversized in length by human standards. There was no thumb. . . . The chest area contained what seemed like two atrophied mammary gland nipples. The sexual organs were atrophied. Some other investigators have observed female specimens. I have not had this opportunity. The legs were short and thin. The feet didn't have any toes. The skin covered the foot in such a way that it gave the appearance of wearing a sock. However, X-ray examination showed normal bone structure underneath.

The informant later stated that under a microscope the alien skin tissue looked meshlike, in other words a grid's network of horizontal and perpendicular lines.

Stringfield published periodic updates as new information, third-, second- and firsthand, came his way. As he had done from the beginning, he tended to take the testimony at face value unless clear indications of a hoax were available. Though this approach left him open to criticism, by the time of his death (in 1994) his efforts as a collector of—depending on one's point of view—urban legends or raw data about UFO secrets had won him many friends and admirers.

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CRASHES  
AND  
RETRIEVALS  
OF UFOS







## DARK SIDE

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**A**mong the strangest and most convoluted UFO stories of the last two decades is one that concerns allegations from various sources, some of them said to be individuals connected with military and intelligence agencies, that the U.S. government not only has communicated with but has an ongoing relationship with what are known officially as “extraterrestrial biological entities,” or EBEs (pronounced ee-**buhs**). These unsubstantiated claims have given rise to nightmarish conspiracy claims that some call Dark Side theories.

**The Emenegger/Sandler saga.** The story begins in 1973, when Robert Emenegger and Allan Sandler, two well-connected Los Angeles businessmen, were invited to Norton Air Force Base in California to discuss a possible documentary film on advanced research projects. Two military officials, one the base’s head of the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI), the other audio-visual director Paul Shartle, discussed a number of projects. One of them involved UFOs. This one sounded the most interesting, and plans were launched to go ahead with a film on the subject.

Emenegger and Sandler were told of a film taken at Holloman AFB, New Mexico, in May 1971. In October 1988, in a national television broadcast, Shartle would declare that he had seen the 16-mm film showing “three disc-shaped craft. One of the craft landed, and two of them went away.” A door opened on the land-



ed vehicle, and three beings emerged. Shartle said, "They were human-size. They had an odd, gray complexion and a pronounced nose. They wore tightfitting jump suits, [and] thin headdresses that appeared to be communication devices, and in their hands they held a 'translator'. A Holloman base commander and other Air Force officers went out to meet them."

Emenegger was led to believe he would be given the film for use in his documentary. He was even taken to Norton and shown the landing site and the building in which the spaceship had been stored and others (Buildings 383 and 1382) in which meetings between the Air Force personnel and the aliens had been conducted over the next several days. According to his sources, the landing had taken place at 6 a.m. The extraterrestrials were "doctors, professional types." Their eyes had "vertical slits like a cat's, and their mouths were thin and slitlike, with no chins." All that Emenegger was told of what occurred in the meetings was a single stray "fact": that the military people said they were monitoring signals from an alien group with which they were unfamiliar, and did their ET guests know anything about them? The ETs said no.

Emenegger's military sources said he would be given 3200 feet of film taken of the landing. At the last minute, however, permission was withdrawn, though Emenegger and Sandler were encouraged to describe the Holloman landing as something hypothetical, something that could happen or might happen in the future.

The documentary film *UFOs Past, Present and Future* (Sandler International Films, Inc.) was released in 1974 along with a paperback book of the same title. The Holloman incident is recounted in three pages (127-29) of the book's "Future" section. Elsewhere, in a selection of photos and illustrations, is an artist's concept of what one of the Holloman entities looked like, though it, along with other alien figures, is said only to be "based on eyewitness descriptions."

Emenegger's association with the military and intelligence people he had met while doing the film would continue for years. At one point in the late 1980s, he claims, his sources told him that he was about to be invited to film an interview with a live extraterrestrial in a southwestern state, but nothing came of it.

**An incident in South Dakota.** On February 9, 1978, a curious document—an apparent carbon copy of an official U.S. Air Force incident report—arrived at the office of the *National Enquirer* in Lantana, Florida. Accompanying the document was an unsigned letter dated "29 Jan." It read:

The incident stated in the attached report actually occurred. The Air Force appointed a special team of individuals to investigate the incident. I was one of those individuals. I am still on active duty and so I cannot state my name at this time. It is not that I do not trust the Enquirer (I sure [sic] you would treat my name with [sic] confidence but I do not trust others.) The incident[,] which occurred on 16 Nov 77, was classified as top secret on 2 Dec 77. At that time I obtained a

copy of the original report. I thought at that time that the Air Force would probably hush the whole thing up, and they did. The Air Force ordered the silence on 1 Dec 77, after which, the report was classified. There were 16 pictures taken at the scene. I do not have access to the pictures at this time.

The report, stamped FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY, purported to be from the commander of the 44th Missile Security Squadron at Ellsworth AFB near Rapid City, South Dakota. The incident was described as a "Helping Hand (security violation)/Covered Wagon (security violation) at Lima 9 (68th SMSq Area), 7 miles SW of Nisland, SD, at 2100 hours on 16 Nov 77." The recipient of the report was identified as "Paul D. Hinzman, SSgt, USAF, Comm/Plotter, Wing Security Council." Two security men, Airmen 1st Class Kenneth Jenkins and Wayne E. Raeke, experienced and reported the incident, which was investigated by Capt. Larry D. Stokes and TSgt. Robert E. Stewart.

The document told an incredible story. At 10:59 on the evening of November 16, an alarm sounded from the Lima Nine missile site. Jenkins and Raeke, at the Lima Launch Control Facility 35 miles away, were dispatched to the scene. On their arrival Raeke set out to check the rear fence line. There he spotted a helmeted figure in a glowing green metallic suit. The figure pointed a weapon at Raeke's rifle and caused it to disintegrate, burning Raeke's hands and arms in the process. Raeke summoned Jenkins, who helped his companion back to their Security Alert Team vehicle. When Jenkins went to the rear fence line, he saw two similarly garbed figures. He ordered them to halt, but when they ignored his command, he opened fire. His bullets struck one in the shoulder and the other in the helmet. The figures ran over a hill and were briefly out of sight. Jenkins pursued them, and when he next saw them, they were entering a 20-foot-diameter saucer-shaped object, which shot away over the horizon.

As Raeke was air-evacuated from the scene, investigators discovered that the missile's nuclear components had been stolen.

*Enquirer* reporters suspected a **hoax**, but when they called Rapid City and Ellsworth to check on the names, they were surprised to learn that such persons did exist. Moreover, all were on active duty. The *Enquirer* sent reporters to Rapid City. Over the course of the next few days, they found that though the individuals were real, the document inaccurately listed their job titles, the geography of the alleged incident was wrong (there was no nearby hill over which intruders could have run), Raeke had suffered no injuries, he and Jenkins did not even know each other, and no one (including Rapid City civilian residents and area ranchers) had heard anything about such an encounter. As one of the reporters, Bob Pratt, wrote in a subsequent account, "We found more than 20 discrepancies or errors in the report—wrong names, numbers, occupations, physical layouts and so on. Had the Security Option alert mentioned in the report taken place, it would have involved



all security personnel at the base, and everyone at the base and in Rapid City (population 45,000 plus) would have known about it."

**The Bennewitz affair.** In the late 1970s Paul Bennewitz, an Albuquerque businessman trained as a physicist, became convinced that he was monitoring electromagnetic signals that extraterrestrials were using to control persons they had abducted. Bennewitz believed he had succeeded at decoding these signals. At the same time he began to see what he thought were UFOs maneuvering around the Manzano Nuclear Weapons Storage Facility and the Coyote Canyon test area, located near Kirtland AFB.

Bennewitz reported all this to the Tucson-based **Aerial Phenomena Research Organization** (APRO), whose directors judged him to be deluded. But at Kirtland Bennewitz's claims, or at least some of them, were being taken more seriously. On October 24, 1980, Bennewitz contacted AFOSI agent Sgt. Richard Doty (whose previous tour of duty had been at Ellsworth) and related that he had evidence of something potentially threatening in the Manzano Weapons Storage Area. A "Multipurpose Internal OSI Form," signed by Maj. Thomas A. Cseh (Commander of the Base Investigative Detachment), dated October 28, 1980, and subsequently released under the Freedom of Information Act, states:

On 26 Oct 80, SA [Special Agent] Doty, with the assistance of JERRY MILLER, GS-15, Chief, Scientific Advisor for Air Force Test and Evaluation Center, KAFB, interviewed Dr. BENNEWITZ at his home in the Four Hills section of Albuquerque, which is adjacent to the northern boundary of Manzano Base. (NOTE: MILLER is a former Project Blue Book USAF Investigator who was assigned to Wright-Patterson AFB (W-PAFB), OH, with FTD [Foreign Technology Division]. Mr. MILLER is one of the most knowledgeable and impartial investigators of Aerial Objects in the southwest.) Dr. BENNEWITZ has been conducting independent research into Aerial Phenomena for the last 15 months. Dr. BENNEWITZ also produced several electronic recording tapes, allegedly showing high periods of electrical magnetism being emitted from Manzano/Coyote Canyon area. Dr. BENNEWITZ also produced several photographs of flying objects taken over the general Albuquerque area. He has several pieces of electronic surveillance equipment pointed at Manzano and is attempting to record high frequency electrical beam pulses. Dr. BENNEWITZ claims these Aerial Objects produce these pulses. . . . After analyzing the data collected by Dr. BENNEWITZ, Mr. MILLER related the evidence clearly shows that some type of unidentified aerial objects were caught on film; however, no conclusions could be made whether these objects pose a threat to Manzano/Coyote Canyon areas. Mr. MILLER felt the electronical [sic] recording tapes were inconclusive and could have been gathered from several conventional sources. No sightings, other than these, have been reported in the area.

On November 10 Bennewitz was invited to the base to present his findings to a small group of officers and scientists. Exactly one week later Doty informed Bennewitz that AFOSI had decided against further consideration of the matter. Subsequently Doty reported receiving a call from then-New Mexico Sen. Harrison Schmitt, who wanted to know what AFOSI was planning to do about Bennewitz's allegations. When informed that no investigation was planned, Schmitt spoke with Brig. Gen. William Brooksher of base security. The following July New Mexico's other senator, Pete Domenici, looked into the matter, meeting briefly with Doty before dashing off to talk with Bennewitz personally. Domenici lost interest and dropped the matter.

Bennewitz was also aware of supposed animal mutilations being reported in the western United States. He met a young mother, Myrna Hansen, who told him that one evening in May 1980, after she and her six-year-old son saw several UFOs in a field and one approached them, they suffered confusion and disorientation, then a period of amnesia that lasted as long as four hours. Bennewitz brought the two to University of Wyoming psychologist R. Leo Sprinkle, who hypnotized them and got a detailed **abduction** story from the mother and a sketchy one from the little boy. Early in the course of the abduction they observed aliens take a calf aboard the UFO and mutilate it while it was still alive, removing the animal's genitals.

At one point during the alleged experience, the mother said, they were taken via UFO into an underground area that she believed was in New Mexico. She briefly escaped her captors and fled to an area where there were tanks of water. She looked into one of them and saw body parts such as tongues, hearts, and internal organs, apparently from cattle. But she also observed a human arm with a hand attached. The objects in the tank, she said, "horrified me and made me sick and frightened me to death." She wondered about the other tanks and about their contents.

Already Bennewitz was in the grips of fear and paranoia, to the degree that he had begun to suspect Sprinkle himself was a CIA agent and ordered him to leave before the latter could conduct further hypnotic sessions with Hansen. According to Sprinkle, Bennewitz "had rifle in hand and pistol on hip" to protect himself against menacing aliens.

**The Moore/MJ-12 maze.** Late in the summer of 1979, William L. Moore was deeply involved in the investigation of an apparent UFO crash in New Mexico in July 1947, a case he and Charles Berlitz would recount in their *The Roswell Incident* the following year (see **Crashes and Retrievals of UFOs**). After his move to the Southwest, Moore became close to APRO directors Coral and Jim Lorenzen, and in due course Moore was asked to join the APRO board. The Lorenzens told him about Bennewitz's fantastic claims.

*The Roswell Incident* was published in the summer of 1980. In September Moore set off from his Arizona home to Washington, DC, to attend a UFO debate at the Smithsonian Institution. Along the way he promoted his new book on radio and television shows. According to an account he would give seven years later, an



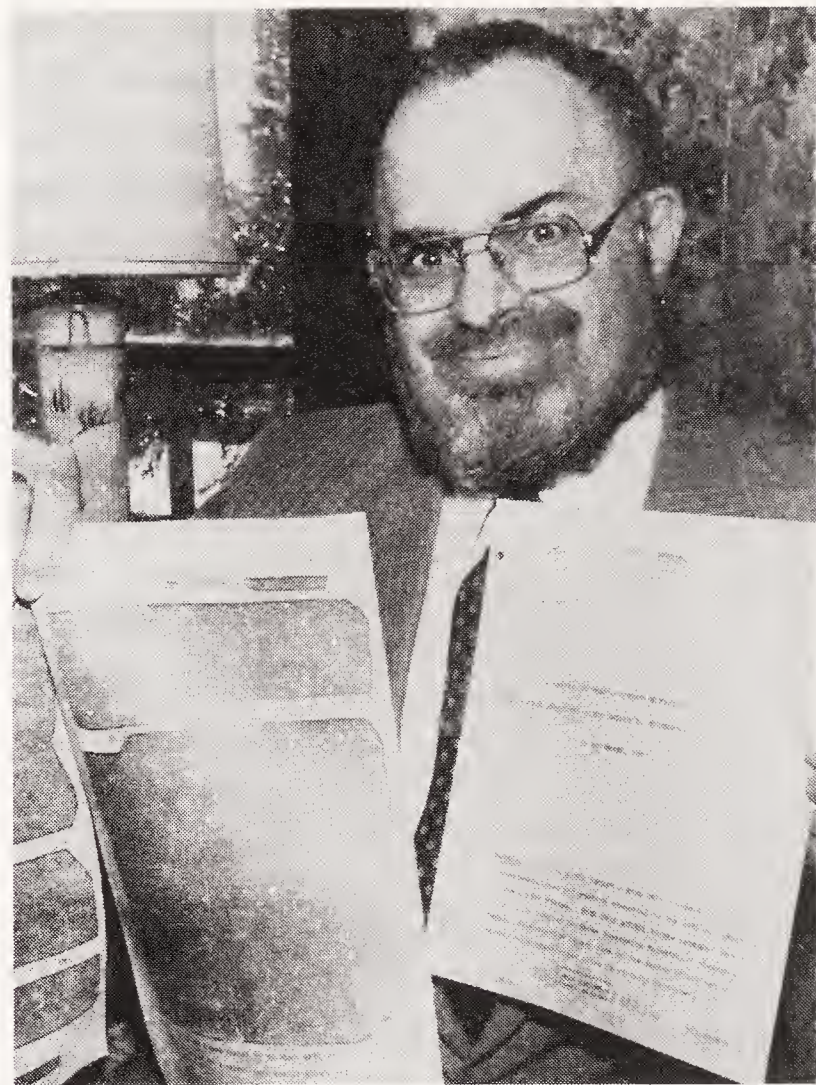
extraordinary series of events began while he was on this trip.

He had done a radio show in Omaha and was in the station lobby on his way out when he took a phone call from a man who claimed to be a colonel at nearby Offutt AFB. He said words to the effect that Moore was the only knowledgeable person "we" had heard. He asked if he and Moore could meet and discuss matters further. Moore said that since he had to catch a plane within the hour, that would not be possible.

On September 8, on his way back from Washington, he did a radio show in Albuquerque. On the way out of the studio, the receptionist informed him that he had a phone call. The caller, who identified himself only as an individual from nearby Kirtland AFB, spoke words much like those the earlier caller had delivered. Soon afterwards Moore and the individual he would call "Falcon" met at a local restaurant. This first meeting would initiate, Moore claims, a long-running relationship between Moore (and, beginning in 1982, partner Jaime Shandera) and 10 members of a shadowy group said to be connected with military intelligence and to be opposed to the continuation of the UFO cover-up. The story that emerged from this interaction goes like this:

The first UFO crash occurred near Corona, New Mexico, in 1947 (the Roswell incident). Two years later a humanoid was found alive, and it was housed at Los Alamos until its death in the early 1950s. Called EBE, after extraterrestrial biological entity, it was the first of three the U.S. government would have in its custody between then and now. An Air Force captain, now a retired colonel, was EBE-1's constant companion. EBE-1, the equivalent of a mechanic on a spacecraft, related what it knew of the nature and purpose of the visitation.

In response to the Roswell incident, MJ-12—the MJ stands for "Majestic"—was set up by executive order of President Harry Truman on September 24, 1947. MJ-12 operates as a policy-making body. Project Aquarius is an umbrella group in which all the various compartments dealing with ET-related issues perform their various functions. Project Sigma conducts electronic communications with the



**UFO researcher Stanton T. Friedman displays heavily censored National Security Agency documents on UFO investigations. (J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies)**



extraterrestrials, part of an ongoing contact project run through the National Security Agency (NSA) since 1964, following a landing at Holloman AFB in late April of that year.

Nine extraterrestrial races are visiting the earth. One of these races, little gray-skinned entities from the third planet surrounding Zeta Reticuli, have been here for 25,000 years and influenced the direction of human evolution. They also help in the shaping of our religious beliefs. Some important individuals within the cover-up want it to end and are preparing the American people for the reality of the alien presence through the vehicle of popular entertainment. At CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, there is a thick book called "The Bible," a compilation of all the various project reports.

By his own account, which he would not relate until 1989, Moore cooperated with his AFOSI sources—including, prominently, Richard Doty—and provided them with information. They informed him that there was considerable interest in Bennewitz. Moore was made to understand that as his part of the bargain he was to spy on Bennewitz and also on APRO as well as, in Moore's words, "to a lesser extent, several other individuals." He learned that several government agencies were interested in Bennewitz's activities, and they wanted to inundate him with false information—disinformation, in intelligence parlance—to confuse him. Moore says he was not one of those providing the disinformation, but he knew some of those who were, such as Doty.

Bennewitz on his own had already begun to devise a paranoid interpretation of what he thought he was seeing and hearing, and the disinformation passed on to him built on that foundation. His sources told him that the U.S. government and malevolent aliens are in an uneasy alliance to control the planet, that the aliens are killing and mutilating not only cattle but human beings, whose organs they need to lengthen their lives, and that they are even *eating* human flesh. In underground bases at government installations in Nevada and New Mexico, human and alien scientists work together on ghastly experiments, including the creation of soulless androids out of human and animal body parts. Aliens are abducting as many as one American in 40 and implanting devices that control human behavior. CIA brainwashing and other control techniques are doing the same, turning life on earth into a nightmare of violence and irrationality.

The ever more obsessed Bennewitz tried to alert prominent persons to the imminent threat. Eventually he was hospitalized but on his release resumed his activities for a time. Soon the ghoulish notions spread into the larger UFO community and beyond, to command a small but committed army of believers.

**Doubtful documents.** In 1981 the Lorenzens received an anonymous letter from someone identifying himself as a "USAF Airman assigned to the 1550th Aircrew Training and Testing Wing at Kirtland AFB." The "airman" wrote:



On July 16, 1980, at between 10:30-10:45 a.m., Craig R. Weitzel . . . a Civil Air Patrol Cadet from Dobbins AFB, Ga., visiting Kirtland AFB, NM, observed a dull metallic colored UFO flying from South to North near Pecos[,] New Mexico. Pecos has a secret training site for the 1550th Aircrew Training and Testing Wing, Kirtland AFB, NM. WEITZEL was with ten other individuals, including USAF active duty airmen, and all witnessed the sighting. WEITZEL went closer to the UFO and observed the UFO land in a clearing approximately 20 yds, NNW of the training area. WEITZEL observed an individual dressed in a metallic suit depart the craft and walk a few feet away. The individual was outside the craft for just a few minutes. When the individual returned the craft took off towards the NNW.

The letter writer said he had been with Weitzel when the UFO flew overhead, but he had not been with him to observe the landing.

He went on to say that late on the evening of the next day, a tall, dark-featured, black-suited man wearing sunglasses called on Weitzel at Kirtland. The stranger claimed to be a "Mr. Huck" from Sandia Laboratories, a classified Department of Energy contractor on the base. Mr. Huck told Weitzel he had seen a secret aircraft from Los Alamos, and he demanded all of the photographs. Weitzel replied that he hadn't taken any, that the photographer was an airman whose name he did not know. The letter goes on:

The individual warned Weitzel not to mention the sighting to anyone or Weitzel would be in serious trouble. After the individual left Weitzel[s] room, Weitzel wondered how the individual knew of the sighting because Weitzel didn't report the sighting to anyone. Weitzel became scared after thinking of the threat the individual made. Weitzel call [sic] the Kirtland AFB and reported the incident to them. They referred him to the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI), which investigates these matters according to the security police. A Mr. Dody [sic], a special agent with OSI, spoke with Weitzel and took a report. Mr. Dody [sic] also obtained all the photographs of the UFO. Dody [sic] told Weitzel he would look into the matter. That was the last anyone heard of the incident.

I have every reason to beleive [sic] the USAF is covering up something. I spent a lot of time looking into this matter and I know there is more to it than the USAF will say. I have heard . . . serious rumors here at Kirtland that the USAF has a crashed UFO stored in the Manzano Storage area, which is located in a remote area of Kirtland AFB. This area is heavily guarded by USAF Security. I have spoke [sic] with two employees of Sandia Laboratories, who also store classified objects in Manzano, and they told me that Sandia has examined several UFO's during the last 20 years. One that crashed near Roswell[,] NM[,] in the late

'50s was examined by Sandia scientists. That craft is still being store [sic] in Manzano.

I have reason to beleive [sic] OSI is conducting a very secret investigation into UFO sightings. OSI took over when Project Blue Book was closed. I was told this by my commander, COL Bruce Purvine. COL Purvine also told me that the investigation was so secret that most employees of OSI doesn't [sic] even know it. But COL Purvine told me that Kirtland AFB, AFOSI District 17 has a special secret detachment that investigates sightings around this area. They have also investigated cattle mutilations in New Mexico.

In 1985 investigator Benton Jamison located Craig Weitzel, who confirmed that he had indeed seen a UFO in 1980 and reported it to Sgt. Doty. But his sighting, while interesting, was rather less dramatic than the **close encounter of the third kind** reported in the letter. Weitzel saw a silver-colored object some 10,000 to 15,000 feet overhead. After maneuvering for a few minutes, he told Jamison, it "accelerated like you never saw anything accelerate before." He also said he knew nothing of a meeting with anyone identified as "Mr. Huck."

In December 1982, in response to a Freedom of Information request, AFOSI released a two-page OSI Complaint Form stamped "For Official Use Only." Dated September 8, 1980, it was titled "Kirtland AFB, NM, 8 Aug-3 Sept 80, Alleged Sightings of Unidentified Aerial Lights in Restricted Test Range." The document described several sightings of UFOs in the Manzano Weapons Storage Area, at the Coyote Canyon section of the Department of Defense Restricted Test Range. One of the reports cited was a New Mexico State Patrolman's August 10 observation of a UFO landing. (A later check with state police sources by Larry Fawcett, a Connecticut police officer and UFO investigator, uncovered no record of such a report. The sources asserted that the absence of a report could only mean that no such incident had ever happened.) This intriguing document is signed by then OSI Special Agent Richard C. Doty.

In 1987, after comparing three documents (the anonymous letter to APRO; the September 8, 1980, AFOSI Complaint Form; and a purported August 14, 1980, AFOSI document that claimed "frequent jamming" by UFOs in the Kirtland area), researcher Brad Sparks concluded that Doty had written all three. In 1989 Moore confirmed that Doty had written the letter to APRO. "Essentially it was 'bait'," he said. "AFOSI knew that Bennewitz had close ties with APRO at the time, and they were interested in recruiting someone within . . . APRO . . . who would be in a position to provide them with feedback on Bennewitz[s] activities and communications. Since I was the APRO Board member in charge of Special Investigations in 1980, the Weitzel letter was passed on to me for action shortly after it had been received." According to Bruce Maccabee, Doty admitted privately that he had written the Ellsworth AFB document, basing it on a real incident that he wanted to bring to public attention. Doty has made no public comment on any of these allegations.



Doty was also the source of an alleged AFOSI communication dated November 17, 1980, and destined to become known as the "Aquarius document." Allegedly sent from AFOSI headquarters at Bolling AFB in Washington, DC, to the AFOSI District 17 office at Kirtland, it mentions, in brief and cryptic form, analyses of negatives from a UFO film apparently taken the previous month. The version that circulated in the UFO community states in its penultimate paragraph:

USAF NO LONGER PUBLICLY ACTIVE IN UFO RESEARCH, HOWEVER USAF STILL HAS INTEREST IN ALL UFO SIGHTINGS OVER USAF INSTALLATION/TEST RANGES. SEVERAL OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, LED BY NASA, ACTIVELY INVESTIGATES [sic] LEGITIMATE SIGHTINGS THROUGH COVERT COVER. . . . ONE SUCH COVER IS UFO REPORTING CENTER, US COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY, ROCKVILLE, MD 20852. NASA FILTERS RESULTS OF SIGHTINGS TO APPROPRIATE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS WITH INTEREST IN THAT PARTICULAR SIGHTING. THE OFFICIAL US GOVERNMENT POLICY AND RESULTS OF PROJECT AQUARIUS IS [sic] OUTSIDE OFFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CHANNELS AND WITH RESTRICTED ACCESS TO "MJ TWELVE."

This is the first mention of "MJ-12" in a supposedly official government document. Moore describes it as an "example of some of the disinformation produced in connection with the Bennewitz case. The document is a retyped version of a real AFOSI message with a few spurious additions." Among the most significant additions, by Moore's account, are the bogus references to the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey and to NASA, which he says was NSA in the original.

As Moore tells it, Doty got the document "right off the teletype" and showed it to Moore almost immediately. Later Doty came by with what purported to be a copy of it, but Moore noticed that it was not exactly the same; material had been added to it. Doty said he wanted Moore to give the doctored copy to Bennewitz. Moore sat on it for a while but eventually gave the document to Bennewitz, on the understanding he was not to publicize it.

As of September 1982 Moore knew of three copies of the document: the one Bennewitz had, one Moore had in safekeeping, and one he had in his briefcase during a trip he made that month to meet someone in San Francisco. He met the man in the morning, and that afternoon someone broke into his car and stole his briefcase. Four months later a copy of the document showed up in the hands of a New York lawyer interested in UFOs, and soon the document was circulating widely. Moore himself had little to say on the subject until he delivered a controversial speech to the annual convention of the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) in Las Vegas in 1989.

In late 1982, "during," he said, "one of the many friendly conversations I had with Richard Doty," Moore mentioned that he was looking into the old (and seemingly discredited) story that a UFO had crashed in Aztec, New Mexico, in 1948. This tale was the subject of Frank Scully's 1950 book, *Behind the Flying Saucers*. Doty said he had never heard the story and asked for details.

On January 10 and 11, 1983, attorney Peter Gersten, director of Citizens Against UFO Secrecy (CAUS), met with Doty in New Mexico. During the first meeting Doty was guarded in his remarks. But at the second he spoke openly about what ostensibly were extraordinary secrets. He said the Ellsworth case was the subject of an investigation by AFOSI and the FBI; nuclear weapons were involved. The *National Enquirer* investigation, which had concluded that the story was fiction, was "amateurish."

Doty also asserted that UFOs are extraterrestrial and from 50 light years away. He knew of at least three UFO crashes. Bodies had been recovered. A spectacular incident, much like the one depicted in the ending of the 1977 film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, took place in 1966. The NSA was involved in communications with extraterrestrials. Inside the UFO organizations government moles are collecting information and spreading disinformation.

He discussed the Aquarius document and said the really important documents are impossible to get out of the appropriate files. These documents tell of agreements between the U.S. government and extraterrestrials under which the latter are free to conduct animal mutilations (especially of cattle) and to land at a certain base, in exchange for information about advanced UFO technology. Doty also claimed that via popular entertainment the American people are being prepared to accept the reality of visitation by benevolent beings from other worlds.

**The odyssey of Linda Moulton Howe.** In the 1970s, as director of special projects for the Denver CBS-TV affiliate, Linda Moulton Howe had produced the documentary *Strange Harvest*, which dealt with widespread reports that cattle in western and midwestern states were being killed and mutilated by persons or forces unknown. Some even speculated that extraterrestrials were responsible. This possibility intrigued Howe.

In the fall of 1982, as Howe was working on a documentary on an unrelated matter, she got a call from Home Box Office (HBO). The caller said the HBO people had been impressed with *Strange Harvest* and wanted to know if Howe would do a film on UFOs. In March 1983 she went to New York to sign a contract with HBO for a show to be titled *UFOs—The ET Factor*.

The evening before her meeting with the HBO representatives, Howe had dinner with Gersten and science writer Patrick Huyghe. Gersten told Howe that he had met with Sgt. Richard Doty, and perhaps Doty would be willing to talk on camera about the incident at Ellsworth. Gersten would ask.

Subsequently, arrangements were made for Howe to fly to Albuquerque on April 9. But when she arrived that morning, Doty was not there. Howe phoned Jerry Miller, Chief of Reality Weapons Testing at Kirtland and a former Blue Book investigator. (He is mentioned in the October 28, 1980, "Multipurpose Internal OSI Form" reporting on Doty and Miller's meeting with Bennewitz.) She knew Miller from an earlier telephone conversation, when she had called to ask him about



Bennewitz's claims. Miller asked for a copy of *Strange Harvest*. Later he had given Howe his home phone number and said to contact him if she ever found herself in Albuquerque. So she called and asked if he would pick her up at the airport.

Miller drove Howe to his house. When they got there, Miller called Doty at his home, and Doty arrived a few minutes later. On their way to Kirtland, Howe asked Doty if he knew anything about the Holloman landing. Doty said it happened but that Robert Emenegger had the date wrong; it was not May 1971 but April 25, 1964—12 hours after a much-publicized encounter reported by Socorro, New Mexico, policeman Lonnie Zamora. (See **Socorro CE2/CE3**.) When three UFOs appeared at Holloman at six o'clock the following morning, one landed while the other two hovered overhead. During the meeting between the UFO beings and a government party, the preserved bodies of dead aliens had been given to the extraterrestrials. Five ground and aerial cameras recorded this event.

At the Kirtland gate Doty waved to the guard and was let through. They went to a small white and gray building. Doty took her to what he called "my boss' office." Doty seemed unwilling to discuss the Ellsworth case, the ostensible reason for the interview, but had much to say about other matters.

"My superiors have asked me to show you this," he said. He produced a brown envelope he had taken from a drawer in the desk at which he was sitting and withdrew several sheets of white paper. As he handed them to Howe, he warned her that they could not be copied; all she could do was read them in his presence and ask questions.

The document gave no indication as to which government, military, or scientific agency (if any) had prepared the report, titled *A Briefing Paper for the President of the United States on the Subject of Unidentified Flying Vehicles*. The title did not specify which president it had in mind, nor did the document list a date that would have linked it to a particular administration.

The first paragraph listed dates and locations of crashes and retrievals of UFOs and their occupants. The latter were described as three and a half to four feet tall, gray-skinned and hairless, with oversized heads, large eyes, and no noses. It was now known, the document stated on a subsequent page, that these beings, from a nearby solar system, have been here for many thousands of years. Through genetic manipulation they influenced the course of human evolution. They had also helped shape our religious beliefs.

The July 1947 Roswell crash was mentioned. So, however, was another one at Roswell in 1949. Investigators at the site found five bodies and one living alien, who was taken to a safe house at the Los Alamos National Laboratory north of Albuquerque. The aliens were known as extraterrestrial biological entities, and the living one was called "EBE." EBE was befriended (if that was the word) by an Air Force officer, but the being died of unknown causes on June 18, 1952. (EBE's friend, by 1964 a colonel, was among those who were there to greet the aliens who landed at Holloman.) Subsequently it would be referred to as EBE-1, since in later

years another such being, EBE-2, would take up residence in a safe house. After that a third, EBE-3, appeared on the scene and was now living in secret at an American base.

The briefing paper said other crashes had occurred, including one at Aztec, New Mexico. The wreckage and bodies had been removed to such facilities as the Los Alamos laboratory and Wright-Patterson AFB. A number of highly classified projects dealt with these materials. They included Snowbird (research and development from back-engineering of an intact spacecraft left by the aliens as a gift) and Aquarius (the umbrella operation under which the research and contact efforts were coordinated). Project Sigma was the ongoing electronic-communications effort. There was also a defunct Project Garnet, intended to investigate extraterrestrial influence on human evolution.

The paper said Project Blue Book had existed solely to take heat off the Air Force and to draw attention away from the real projects. Doty mentioned an "MJ-12," explaining that "MJ" stood for "Majority." A policy-making body, its membership consisted of 12 very high-ranking government scientists, military officers, and intelligence officials.

Doty promised Howe thousands of feet of film of crashed discs, bodies, EBE-1, and the Holloman landing and meeting. She could use this material in her documentary to tell the story of how U.S. officials learned that the earth is being visited and what they have done about it. He said that another plan to release the information, through Emenegger and Sandler, had been halted because political conditions were not right.

Over the next weeks Howe had a number of phone conversations with Doty. She spoke on several occasions with three other men but did not meet them personally.

Howe, of course, informed her HBO contacts of these extraordinary developments. Howe urged them to prepare themselves, legally and otherwise, for the repercussions that would surely follow the release of the film. The HBO people told her she would have to secure a letter of intent from the U.S. government with a legally binding commitment to release the promised film footage. When Howe called Doty about it, he said, "I'll work on it."

Doty said she and a small crew would soon be able to interview the retired colonel (then a captain) who had spent three years with EBE-1. On the other hand, it would be three months before the thousands of feet of film of EBE-1 and the Holloman landing/contact would be available. Meanwhile, before she could screen the footage, Howe would have to sign three security oaths and undergo a background check.

The interview was repeatedly scheduled and canceled. Then in June Doty called to say he was officially out of the project. This was a blow because Howe did



not know how to get in touch with the others and always had to wait for them to contact her.

By October the contacts had decreased. The same month her contract with HBO expired. All she had was the name of the Washington contact. In March 1984 this individual phoned her office three times, though she was out of town working on a non-UFO story at the time. "Upon returning home," she wrote, "I learned the man was contacting me to explain there would be further delays in the film project after the November 1984 election."

In 1989 Moore said that

in early 1983 I became aware that Rick [Doty] was involved with a team of several others, including one fellow from Denver that I knew of and at least one who was working out of Washington, D.C., in playing an elaborate disinformation scheme against a prominent UFO researcher who, at the time, had close connections with a major television film company interested in doing a UFO documentary.

The episode was a counterintelligence sting operation, part of the "wall of disinformation" intended to call Bennewitz's "credibility into question." Because of Howe's interest in Bennewitz's work, according to Moore:

certain elements within the intelligence community were concerned that the story of his having intercepted low frequency electromagnetic emissions from the Coyote Canyon area of the Kirtland/Sandia complex would end up as part of a feature film. Since this in turn might influence others (possibly even the Russians) to attempt similar experiments, someone in a control position apparently felt it had to be stopped before it got out of hand.

In his observation, Moore said, "the government seemed hell bent on severing the ties that existed between [Howe] and [HBO]."

Moore said that Doty had added the Aztec crash to the document after learning from Moore of his recent investigation of the hoax.

**MJ-12.** In December 1984, in the midst of continuing contact with their own sources (Doty and a number of others) who claimed to be leaking the secrets of the cover-up, Moore's associate, Jaime Shandera, received a roll of 35-mm film containing what purported to be a briefing paper, dated November 18, 1952, and intended for President-elect Eisenhower. The supposed author, Adm. Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter, reported that an "Operation Majestic-12," consisting of a dozen top scientists, military officers, and intelligence specialists, had been set up by presidential order on September 24, 1947, to study the Roswell remains and the four humanoid bodies that had been recovered nearby.

The document alleges that the team directed by MJ-12 member and physiologist Detlev Bronk "has suggested the term 'Extraterrestrial Biological Entities',

or 'EBEs', be adopted as the standard term of reference for these creatures until such time as a more definitive designation can be agreed upon." Brief mention is also made of a December 6, 1950, crash along the Texas/Mexico border. Nothing is said, however, about live aliens or communications with them.

Moore and Shandera did not release the document until the spring of 1987. Just prior to their doing so, British ufologist Timothy Good, who also had a copy, showed it to the press. The first newspaper article on it appeared in the *London Observer* of May 31, and soon it was the subject of pieces in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and ABC-TV's *Nightline*. It was also denounced as a forgery by debunkers and a number of ufologists. The dispute raged into 1989, when critics discovered that President Truman's signature on the September 24, 1947, executive order (appended to the briefing paper) was exactly like his signature on an undisputed, UFO-unrelated October 1, 1947, letter to his science adviser (and supposed MJ-12 member) Vannevar Bush. To all appearances a forger had appended a real signature to a fake letter. To some the MJ-12 document began to look like another disinformation scheme.

Though acutely aware of the mass of disinformation circulating throughout the UFO community, Moore insisted that at least some of the information his own sources were giving him was authentic. In 1988 he provided two of his sources, "Falcon" and "Condor," to a television production company. (Moore and Shandera had given them avian names and called the sources collectively "the birds.") *UFO Cover-up . . . Live*, a two-hour program, aired in October 1988, with Falcon and Condor, their faces shaded, their voices altered, relating the same tales with which they had regaled Moore and Shandera.

**Lear's conspiracy theory.** Events on the UFO scene were taking a yet more bizarre turn that same year as even wilder yarns began to circulate. The first to tell them was John Lear, a pilot with a background in the CIA and the estranged son of aviation legend William P. Lear. Lear claimed to have the stories from unnamed but well-connected sources:

Not just a few but dozens of flying saucers had crashed over the years. In 1962 the U.S. government initiated Project Redlight to find a way to fly the recovered craft. A similar project is run out of supersecret military installations. One is the now-fabled Area 51 (specifically at a facility called S4) at the Nevada Test Site, and the other is set up near Dulce, New Mexico. These areas, unfortunately, may no longer be under the control of the government or even of the human race. In the late 1960s an official agency so secret that not even the president may know of it had made a pact with aliens. In exchange for extraterrestrial technology the secret government would permit (or at least not interfere with) a limited number of abductions of human beings. The aliens, however, were to provide a list of those they planned to kidnap.

All went relatively well until 1973, when the government discovered that thousands of persons who were not on the aliens' list were being abducted. The



resulting tensions led to an altercation in 1978 or 1979. The aliens held and then killed 44 top scientists as well as a number of Delta force troops who had tried to free them. Ever since, frantic efforts, of which the Strategic Defense Initiative ("Star Wars") is the most visible manifestation, have been made to develop a defense against the extraterrestrials, who are busy putting implants into abductees (as many as one in 10 Americans) to control their behavior. At some time in the near future, these people will be used for some unknown, apparently sinister alien purpose.

The aliens take sex and other organs from both human beings and cattle and use them to create androids in giant vats located in underground laboratories at Area 51 and Dulce. The extraterrestrials, from an ancient race near the end of its evolution, also use materials from human body parts as a method of biological rejuvenation.

One of Lear's major sources was Bennewitz, who had first heard these scary stories from AFOSI personnel at Kirtland in the early 1980s, if we are to credit Moore's testimony. By this time Bennewitz had become something of a guru to a small group of UFO enthusiasts, Linda Howe among them, who believed extraterrestrials were mutilating cattle and had no trouble believing they might do the same thing to people. Also Lear was linking his UFO beliefs with conspiracy theories about a malevolent secret American government that was attempting to use the aliens for its own purposes, including enslavement of the world's population through drug addiction. A considerable body of rightwing-conspiracy literature, some with barely concealed anti-Semitic overtones, was making similar charges.

Another of his claimed sources was an unnamed physicist who, Lear averred, had actually worked at S4. Robert Lazar allegedly worked on alien-technology projects at Area 51. Though he did not endorse Lear's claims about human-alien treaties, man-eating extraterrestrials, or any of the rest, he seemed to back at least some of Lear's basic story. Later, however, Lazar's credibility came into question when his claims about his employment and education history could not be verified.

**Cooper's conspiracy theory.** Soon Lear was joined by someone with an even bigger supply of fabulous yarns: one Milton William Cooper.

Cooper surfaced on December 18, 1988, when his account of the fantastic secrets he learned while a Navy petty officer appeared on a computer network. Cooper said that while working as a quartermaster with an intelligence team for Adm. Bernard Clarey, Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, he saw two documents, Project Grudge Special Report 13 and a Majority briefing. (In conventional UFO history, **Project Grudge** was the second Air Force UFO agency, superseding the original, **Project Sign**, in early 1949 and lasting until early 1952, when it was renamed Blue Book. Whereas Sign investigators at one time concluded that UFOs were of extraterrestrial origin—a conclusion the Air Force leadership found unacceptable—Grudge, as its name suggests, was known for its hostility to the idea of UFOs and for its eagerness to assign conventional explanations, warranted or otherwise, to the sighting reports that came its way.)

Cooper's account of what was in these reports is much like the by-now-familiar story of crashes, bodies, contacts, and projects, with some elaborations. For example, he said the aliens were called "ALFs" (Alien Life Forms) and the "M" in MJ-12 is for Majority, not Majestic. Later he would say he had seen photographs of aliens, including a type he called the "big-nosed grays"—like those that supposedly landed at Holloman in 1964 or 1971. The U.S. government was in contact with them, and alien-technology projects were going on at Area 51.

If this sounded like a rehash of Moore and Lear, that was only because Cooper had yet to pull out all the stops. On May 23, 1989, Cooper produced a 25-page document titled *The Secret Government: The Origin, Identity and Purpose of MJ-12*. In Cooper's version of the evolving legend, the "secret government," an unscrupulous group of covert CIA and other intelligence operatives who keep many of their activities sealed from even the president's knowledge, runs the country. One of its first acts was to murder one-time Secretary of Defense (and alleged early MJ-12 member) James Forrestal—the death was made to look like suicide—because he threatened to expose the UFO cover-up. Nonetheless President Truman, fearing an invasion from outer space, kept other nations, including the Soviet Union, abreast of developments. But keeping all this secret was a real problem, so an international secret society known as the Bilderbergers, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, was formed. Soon it became a secret world government and "now controls everything," Cooper said.

All the while flying saucers were dropping like flies out of the heavens. In 1953 there were 10 crashes in the United States alone. Also that year astronomers observed huge spaceships heading toward the earth and in time entering into orbit around the equator. Project Plato was established to effect communication with these new aliens. A face-to-face meeting took place, and plans for diplomatic relations were laid. Meanwhile a race of human-looking aliens warned the U.S. government that the new visitors were not to be trusted and that if the government got rid of its nuclear weapons, the human aliens would help us in our spiritual development, which would keep us from destroying ourselves through wars and pollution. The government rejected these overtures.

The big-nosed grays, the ones who had been orbiting the equator, landed again, this time at Holloman AFB, in 1954 and reached an agreement with the U.S. government. These beings stated that they were from a dying planet that orbits Betelgeuse. In the not too distant future they will have to leave there for good. A second meeting took place not long afterwards at Edwards AFB in California. This time President Eisenhower was there to sign a formal treaty and to meet the first alien ambassador, "His Omnipotent Highness Krill," pronounced Krill. In common with his fellow space travelers, he wore a trilateral insignia on his uniform. The same design appears on all Betelgeuse spacecraft.

As Cooper's account had it, the treaty's provisions were these: Neither side could interfere in the affairs of the other. The aliens would abduct humans from



time to time and would return them unharmed, with no memory of the event. The aliens would provide a list of names of those they were going to take. The U.S. government would keep the aliens' presence a secret, and it would receive advanced technology from them. The two sides would exchange 16 individuals each for the purpose of learning from and teaching each other. The aliens would stay on earth, and the humans would go to the other planet, then return after a specified period of time. The two sides would jointly occupy huge underground bases that would be constructed at hidden locations in the Southwest.

By 1955, during the Eisenhower years, Cooper charged, officials learned that aliens had broken the treaty before the ink on it had time to dry. They were killing and mutilating both humans and animals, failing to supply a complete list of abductees, and not returning some of those they had taken. On top of that, they were conspiring with the Soviets, manipulating society through occultism, witchcraft, religion, and secret organizations. Eisenhower prepared a secret executive memo, NSC 5411, ordering a study group of 35 top members (the "Jason Society") associated with the Council on Foreign Relations to "examine all the facts, evidence, lies, and deception and discover the truth of the alien question." Because the resulting meetings were held at Quantico Marine Base, they were called the Quantico meetings.

The group decided that the danger to established social, economic, religious, and political institutions was so grave that no one must know about the aliens, not even Congress. That meant that alternative sources of funding would have to be found. It also concluded that the aliens were using human organs and tissues to replenish their deteriorating genetic structure.

Further, according to Cooper, overtures were made to the Soviet Union and other nations so that all the earth could join together to deal with the alien menace. Research into sophisticated new weapons systems commenced. Intelligence sources penetrated the Vatican hoping to learn the Fátima prophecy, which had been kept secret since 1917. It was suspected that the Fátima, Portugal, "miracle" was an episode of alien manipulation. As it turned out, the prophecy stated that in 1992 a child would unite the world under the banner of a false religion. By 1995 people would figure out that he was the Antichrist. That same year World War III would begin when an alliance of Arab nations invaded Israel. This would lead to nuclear war in 1999. The next four years would see horrible death and suffering all over the planet. Christ would return in 2011.

When confronted about this, claimed Cooper, the aliens candidly acknowledged it was true. They knew it because they had traveled into the future via time machine and observed it with their own eyes. They added that they created us through genetic manipulation. Later the Americans and the Soviets also developed time travel and confirmed the Fátima/ET vision of the future.

In 1957 the Jason group met again, by order of Eisenhower, to decide what to do. It came up with three alternatives: (1) Use nuclear bombs to blow holes in

the stratosphere so that pollution could escape into space. (2) Build a huge network of tunnels under the earth and save enough human beings of varying cultures, occupations, and talents so that the race could reemerge after the nuclear and environmental catastrophes to come. Everybody else—the rest of humanity, in other words—would be left on the surface presumably to die. (3) Employ alien and terrestrial technology to leave earth and colonize the moon (code name “Adam”) and Mars (“Eve”).

The first alternative was deemed impractical, so the Americans and the Soviets started working on the other two. Meanwhile they decided that the population would have to be controlled, which could be done most easily by killing off as many “undesirables” as possible. Thus AIDS and other deadly diseases were introduced into the population. Another idea to raise needed funds was quickly acted on: peddle drugs on a massive scale. An ambitious young member of the Council on Foreign Relations, a Texas oil-company president named George Bush, was put in charge of the project, with the aid of the CIA.

Unknown to just about everybody, a secret American/Soviet/alien space base existed on the dark side of the moon. By the early 1960s human colonies were thriving on the surface of Mars. All the while the naive people of the earth were led to believe the Soviets and the Americans were something other than the closest allies. But Cooper’s story got even more bizarre and byzantine.

He claimed that in 1963, when President Kennedy found out some of what was going on, he gave an ultimatum to MJ-12: get out of the drug business. He also declared that in 1964 he would tell the American people about the alien visitation. Agents of MJ-12 ordered his assassination. Kennedy was murdered in full view of many hundreds of onlookers, none of whom apparently noticed, by the Secret Service agent driving the President’s car in the Dallas motorcade.

In 1969, Cooper reported, a confrontation between human scientists and aliens at the Dulce laboratory resulted in the scientists being taken hostage by the aliens. Soldiers who tried to free the scientists were killed, unable to overcome the superior alien weapons. The incident led to a two-year rupture in relations. The alliance was resumed in 1971 and continues to this day, even as a vast invisible financial empire run by the CIA, the NSA, and the Council on Foreign Relations sells drugs, launders money, and encourages street crime so that Americans will be susceptible to gun-control legislation. The CIA has gone so far as to employ drugs and hypnosis to cause mentally unstable individuals to murder schoolchildren and other innocents, the point being to encourage anti-gun hysteria. All of this is part of the plot, aided and abetted by mass media (also under the secret government’s control), to so scare Americans that they will soon accept the declaration of martial law. When that happens, people will be rounded up and put in concentration camps already in place. From there they will be flown to the moon and Mars to work as slave labor in the space colonies.

The conspirators already run the world. As Cooper put it:



Even a cursory investigation by the most inexperienced researcher will show that the members of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Trilateral Commission control the major foundations, all of the major media and publishing interests, the largest banks, all the major corporations, the upper echelons of the government, and many other vital interests.

**The ufologists respond.** Cooper told his lurid and outlandish tale as if it were so self-evidently true that sources or supporting data were irrelevant. And to the enthusiastic audiences flocking to Cooper's lectures, no evidence was necessary. By the fall of 1989, Cooper was telling his stories—whose sources were, in fact, flying-saucer folklore, AFOSI disinformation unleashed during the Bennewitz episode, conspiracy literature, and outright fiction (notably a satirical British science-fiction film and book, *Alternative Three*)—to large crowds of Californians willing to pay \$10 or \$15 apiece for the thrill of being scared silly. Lear and Cooper soon were joined by other tellers of tales of UFO horrors.

Few mainstream ufologists took these yarns seriously and at first treated them as something of a bad joke. But when it became clear that Lear, Cooper, and company were commanding significant media attention and finding a following among the larger public attracted to ufology's fringes, where a claim's inherent improbability had never been seen as an obstacle to belief in it, the leaders of the UFO community grew ever more alarmed.

One leader not immediately alarmed was Walter H. Andrus, Jr., director of MUFON, the largest UFO organization in the United States. In 1987, before Lear had proposed what some wags would call the Dark Side Hypothesis, he had offered to host the 1989 MUFON conference in Las Vegas. Andrus agreed. But as Lear's true beliefs became known, leading figures within MUFON expressed concern about Lear's role in the conference. When Andrus failed to respond quickly, MUFON officials were infuriated.

Facing a possible palace revolt, Andrus informed Lear that Cooper, whom Lear had invited to speak at the conference, was unacceptable. But to the critics on the MUFON board and elsewhere in the organization, this was hardly enough. One of them, longtime ufologist Richard Hall, complained that this was "like putting a Band-Aid on a hemorrhage."

**Shooting at the birds.** Meanwhile, another storm was brewing. On March 1, 1989, ufologist Robert Hastings issued a 13-page statement, with 37 pages of appended documents, and mailed it to many of ufology's most prominent individuals. Hastings opened with these remarks:

First, it has been established that "Falcon," one of the principle [sic] sources of the MJ-12 material, is Richard C. Doty, formerly attached to District 17 Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) at Kirtland



Air Force Base, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Sgt. Doty retired from the U.S. Air Force on October 1, 1988.

How do I know that Doty is "Falcon"? During a recent telephone conversation, Linda Moulton Howe told me that when Sgt. Doty invited her to his office at Kirtland AFB in early April 1983, and showed her a purportedly authentic U.S. government document on UFOs, he identified himself as code-name "Falcon" and stated that it was Bill Moore who had given him that name.

Also, in early December 1988, a ranking member of the production team responsible for the "UFO Cover Up?—Live" television documentary confirmed that Doty is "Falcon." This same individual also identified the second MJ-12 source who appeared on the program, "Condor," as Robert Collins who was, until recently, a Captain in the U.S. Air Force. Like Doty, he was stationed at KAFB when he left the service late last year.

Collins, a scientist, was assigned to the plasma physics group at Sandia National Laboratories on the Kirtland base. Following his retirement, he moved to the Midwest and pursued his interest in UFOs.

Both Moore and Doty denied that the latter was Falcon. They claimed Doty had been given that pseudonym long after the 1983 meeting with Howe. Howe, however, stuck by her account.

**Moore confesses.** By mid-1989 the two most controversial figures in ufology were Moore and Lear. Moore's MUFON lecture on July 1 did nothing to quiet his legion of critics. On his arrival in Las Vegas, Moore checked into a different hotel from the one at which the conference was being held. He already had refused to submit his paper for publication in the symposium proceedings, so no one knew what he would say. He had also stipulated that he would take no questions from the floor.

Moore's speech stunned and angered much of the audience. At one point the shouts and jeers of Lear's partisans brought the proceedings to a halt until order was restored. Moore finished and exited immediately. He left Las Vegas not long afterwards.

In his lecture Moore spoke candidly, for the first time, of his part in the counterintelligence operation against Bennewitz. "My role in the affair," he said, "was largely that of a freelancer providing information on Paul's current thinking and activities." Doty was one of those involved in the effort to confuse and discredit Bennewitz. Because of his success at this effort, Moore suggested, Doty was chosen by the real Falcon as "liaison person, although I really don't know. Frankly, I don't believe that Doty does either. In my opinion he was simply a pawn in a much larger game, just as I was."

From disinformation passed on by AFOSI sources and from his own observations and guesses, according to Moore, "by mid-1982" Bennewitz had put together



a story that "contained virtually all of the elements found in the current crop of rumors being circulated around the UFO community." Moore was referring to the outlandish tales Lear and Cooper were telling. Moore said that

when I first ran into the disinformation operation . . . being run on Bennewitz . . . [i]t seemed to me . . . I was in a rather unique position. There I was with my foot . . . in the door of a secret counterintelligence game that gave every appearance of being somehow directly connected to a high-level government UFO project, and, judging by the positions of the people I knew to be directly involved with it, definitely had something to do with national security! There was no way I was going to allow the opportunity to pass me by . . . I would play the disinformation game, get my hands dirty just often enough to lead those directing the process into believing that I was doing exactly what they wanted me to do, and all the while continue to burrow my way into the matrix so as to learn as much as possible about who was directing it and why.

Some of the same people who were passing alleged UFO secrets on to Moore were also involved in the operation against Bennewitz. Moore knew that some of the material he was getting—essentially a mild version of the Bennewitz scenario, without the horror, paranoia, and conspiracy—was false. Moore also said that Linda Howe had been the victim of one of Doty's disinformation operations.

Moore's revelations sent shock waves through the audience. In the weeks to follow, other ufologists expressed astonishment and anger.

The Dark Siders by now had carved out a small niche for themselves in occult America. Even Moore's critics, though devoid of Dark Side sympathies, were puzzled by the extraordinary interest of intelligence operatives in ufologists and the UFO phenomenon. Why, some wondered, go to all this trouble and expense, with so many persons over such a period of time, if there are no real UFO secrets to protect? The question remains unanswered.

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On the morning of January 22, 1878, John Martin, a farmer living six miles south of Denison, Texas, spotted a fast-moving dark object high in the southern sky. When it passed overhead, he saw that it was the size of a "large saucer." It continued on its way and was soon lost to view. In recounting the event, a local newspaper remarked, "Mr. Martin is a gentleman of undoubted veracity and this strange occurrence, if it was not a balloon, deserves the attention of our scientists" (*Denison Daily News*, January 25, 1878).

If accurately reported, the object's rapid speed rules out the balloon identification. Martin apparently saw a classic flying saucer (he may have been the first to use the word "saucer" in a UFO report) or, as astronomer and **Project Blue Book** consultant **J. Allen Hynek** would eventually call the phenomenon, a "daylight disc" (DD).

**"Flying saucers."** In mid-April 1947 several meteorologists working at the Richmond, Virginia, Weather Bureau released a pilot balloon that ascended to 15,000 feet and took an east-to-west course. Soon the scientists noticed that something had joined it: a silvery ellipsoidal object with a flat bottom. When viewed through a theodolite, the disc was seen to have a dome on top. After 15 seconds the object vanished in the west at a rapid rate of speed.

On May 19, at Manitou Springs, Colorado, as seven railroad workers were eating lunch in the early afternoon, they watched a silver object come in from the northwest, stop overhead, and gyrate at 1000 feet. According to witness Dean Hauser, the UFO moved "erratically in wide circles. All this time it reflected light, like metal, but intermittently, as though the angle of reflection might be changing from time to time." After 20 minutes it "disappeared in a straight line in the west-northwest in a clear blue sky" (*Denver Post*, June 28, 1947).

Later that month an Augusta, Georgia, physician on a fishing trip near Beaufort, South Carolina, saw a formation of four silent, "highly polished" discs shoot toward the southeast, spinning on their axes as they did so. Their undersides contained a "circular rim, or projection, about one-quarter of the way from the edges," according to the witness. The discs were visible for no more than 20 seconds (*Augusta Chronicle*, July 6, 1947).

DD and other UFO observations were occurring with some frequency before the Kenneth **Arnold sighting** of June 24 brought awareness, through worldwide press coverage, of what seemed a new and marvelous phenomenon.

At 1 p.m. on July 4, in Portland, Oregon, two employees at an amusement park saw discs passing overhead and notified police. Around the same time Patrolman Kenneth McDowell was feeding pigeons behind Precinct House No. 1 when the birds suddenly acted excited about something. McDowell looked up as five large discs sped by, two splitting off to the south, three continuing on toward the

east. Over the next few minutes a number of other police officers in the area were reporting discs, in one instance as many as 20 at a time. Photographs said to depict daylight discs were taken at Lake City, Washington, on July 4, Phoenix, Arizona, on the seventh, and Morristown, New Jersey, two or three days later.

On the eighth a series of disc sightings, beginning at 9:30 a.m. and ending at 4 p.m., erupted over Muroc Air Base (now Edwards Air Force Base) in California and made a particular impression on the Air Force, according to **Edward J. Ruppelt**, who would head one of its subsequent UFO projects (see **Muroc Air Base Sightings**).

In short, within two weeks of the Arnold sighting, daylight discs had established themselves as the variety of UFO manifestation that for years to come would define *all* UFO phenomena as “flying saucers.” Even nocturnal lights, spheres, triangles, cigars, boomerangs, and other UFOs that were not shaped like discs but were reported with varying degrees of frequency would be called “flying saucers.” In later years DD sightings would decrease in frequency. UFOs are still called flying saucers by some, though in time the term would be used more to deride than to describe.

Nonetheless, the argument that UFOs are vehicles built and flown by intelligent beings begins with the daylight disc. Amorphous lights in the night sky, even ones that perform feats of which astronomical bodies, meteors, airplanes, and balloons are incapable, always seem at least potentially explainable as some natural phenomenon, even if an unknown and remarkable one. DDs are, as all reports attest virtually by definition, structured and craftlike; they give every appearance of being machines, an impression buttressed by not-infrequent observations of windows along their sides and even of occupants within or near the discs. These are not the sorts of things nature is ordinarily understood to produce, and witness exaggeration and misinterpretation alone seem insufficient in most circumstances to explain daylight-disc sightings in conventional terms. Even so iconoclastic an investigator as Allan Hendry found that in relation to other kinds of reports, those involving daylight discs “are not as susceptible to the concern that the information is being partially or completely generated by fantasy.”

To Hynek “daylight discs” were but one component of a larger sighting-classification system (the other components being nocturnal lights, radar/visual cases, and **close encounters** of three kinds), and so for his purposes DDs were saucer-shaped objects seen between dawn and dusk and at a distance of more than 500 feet. Any event involving a UFO seen at less than that was a close encounter of the first (purely visual, with no physical or physiological effects or associated entities), second (environment-affecting), or third (involving observation of or interaction with occupants) kinds. Of course, DDs figured in a considerable number of close encounters as well as radar/visual cases.

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## DEBUNKERS.

→ See Menzel, Donald Howard; *Project Blue Book*; *Project Blue Book Special Report No. 14*; *Project Grudge*; *Robertson Panel*; and *University of Colorado UFO Project*.

## DELPHOS CE2

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A remarkable physical-trace UFO incident took place near the tiny north-central Kansas town of Delphos on November 2, 1971.

At around 7 p.m. Ronald Johnson, 16, and his dog were tending sheep some 200 feet behind the family house when his mother, Erma Johnson, called him in for supper. He told her he would be finished soon. She and her husband Durel went ahead with the meal. When they had finished, Mrs. Johnson called again for Ronald, but there was no response this time.

According to what he would tell his parents, shortly after his mother called him the first time, Ronald heard a "rumbling" sound. Then he saw—75 feet away, in a small grove of trees on the other (northwest) side of the shed—an object become suddenly illuminated with a mass of blue, red, and orange colors. Nine feet in diameter and 10 feet high, the object looked something like the head of a mushroom with a small, fat portion of a stem beneath it. It was hovering two feet above the ground, and the illumination flowed downward to the ground.

The light was so bright, in fact, that it hurt Ronald's eyes when he looked at it directly. The sheep were bellowing as if disturbed. After several minutes the glow at the base grew more intense, and the object took off at an angle, clearing by no more than four feet a shed attached to the sheep pen. The rumbling sound ceased, to be replaced by a high-pitched wail.

At that moment Ronald lost his sight. Now he could only hear the sound of the object as it moved off toward the south, to pass by the house. In a few minutes Ronald's eyes cleared, and he looked up to the sky and saw the object there.

He rushed into the house to tell his parents who, though they saw he was scared and frightened, refused to believe him. Mr. Johnson did go outside, however, where he saw a bright light—half the apparent size of the full moon—in the southern sky. Mrs. Johnson and Ronald joined him, and the three watched the object, with the bluish white color of an arc-welder, move off into the distance.

They went over to the site where the UFO had first appeared. In the darkness they observed a glowing, gray-white circle. Parts of the trees near the circle were glowing as well. Mr. and Mrs. Johnson placed their hands inside the circle and found that the soil was not warm, as they had expected it to be. It felt, however, as if it had been crystallized. Even more weirdly, the couple's fingers became numb. When Mrs. Johnson tried to rub off the soil residue on her leg, the part of the leg she touched also went numb. The condition persisted for several weeks afterwards, according to her. Unfortunately, neither she nor her husband sought medical attention.

Mr. Johnson retrieved a camera and took a picture of the circle and its surrounding environment. He then phoned Willard Critchfield, editor of the *Delphos Republican*. It was now 8 p.m.

**Investigations.** Editor Critchfield did nothing about the call, so the next day Durel and Ronald Johnson drove into town to speak with Thaddia Smith, a *Republican* reporter. She, her husband, and her son-in-law accompanied the Johnsons to the farm. That afternoon she provided a statement to Ottawa County Sheriff Ralph Enlow. This is what Smith saw when she got there:

The circle was still very distinct and plain to see. The soil was dried and crusted. The circle or ring was approximately 8 feet across, the center of the ring and outside area were still muddy from recent rains. The area of the ring that was dried was about a foot across and was very light in color.

The object had crushed a dead tree to the ground either when it landed or [when it] took off, and from appearance had broken a limb of a live tree when it landed. The broken limb was most unusual, it would snap and break as though it had been dead for quite some time, yet it was green under the bark, and the upper area still had green leaves clinging to its branches. However[,] the lower area was free of all leaves and some of the bark on the lower areas looked as though it had been blistered and had a whitish cast.

Having been alerted by a phone call from Smith, Sheriff Enlow, Kansas Highway Patrol Trooper Kenneth Yager, and Undersheriff Harlan Enlow drove to the Johnson farm at 2 p.m. that day and interviewed the three. In his official report Undersheriff Enlow wrote:

Mr. Johnson took us out behind the hog [sic] house where we observed a ring shaped somewhat like a doughnut with a hole in the middle. The





ring was completely dry with the hole in the middle and outside of [sic] the ring mud. There were limbs broken from a tree and a dead tree broken off, there. There was a slight discoloration on the trees. We were given a picture taken the previous evening . . . which showed that the ring glowed in the dark. Undersheriff Enlow took a soil sample from the dried ring and photographed it.

The soil sample taken was almost white in color and very dry. We used a Civil Defense Radiological Monitor to determine that the soil was not radioactive. The soil sample and photographs are stored in the vault in the Sheriff's Office pending further investigation by the proper authorities.

On 11-03-71 Mr. Lester Ernsbarger of 416 Argyle St. in Minneapolis [11 miles south of Delphos] advised Deputy Sheriff Leonard Simpson that at approx. 7.30 p.m. 11-02-71 he had observed a bright light descending in the sky in the Delphos area.

On December 4 Ted Phillips, a Missouri-based UFO investigator who specialized in physical-trace cases, met Sheriff Enlow in the latter's Minneapolis office. The sheriff gave Phillips a soil sample he had taken the day after the sighting. Then they went to the Johnson farm.

Evidence of the incident was still to be seen. According to Phillips:

As we approached the site we walked around a small shed and through scattered trees. To my amazement there was the ring, with snow melting from the ground in all the surrounding area, still to be seen after 32 days. It was perfectly outlined in the unmelted snow. Although the surrounding soil was extremely moist, we found that if the snow was removed from any portion of the ring the soil directly beneath the snow was dry and light brown in color, in contrast with the black, moist soil in the ring center and around the ring.

We removed snow from one section of the ring and introduced water into the exposed ring area: the soil would not permit the water to pass through the surface. This was most remarkable, as there had been several inches of rain and snow between November 2 and December 4.

Mr. Johnson and I next removed a sample from the ring. The sample contained a high concentration of a white substance, and this white material was evident in all of the ring soil that we exposed. The particles were not to be found in the soil in the center of the ring, or in the surrounding soil. The ring soil was quite dry to a depth of at least twelve inches. The soil outside the ring was also sampled and was simply black and wet to a depth of at least eight inches. I cannot imagine soil exposed to the elements remaining so dry for such a long period of time.

Phillips made a second trip to the area on January 11, 1972. He discussed the possibility of a **hoax** with the sheriff and Thaddia Smith. Both discounted the idea. The sheriff called the Johnsons "well known and well respected." Smith agreed.

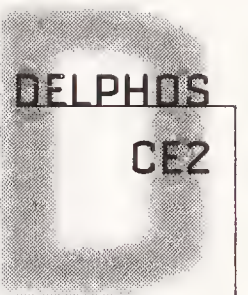
Seven separate soil analyses conducted by university and other laboratories sought to compare control samples with samples taken from within the ring. The latter were found not to absorb water, had a higher acid content, and contained more soluble salts as well as two to two and a half times more calcium. They also produced less seed growth and were coated with a hydrocarbon of low molecular weight that various analysts were able to remove only by heating to 100 degrees C. or washing with ethyl alcohol. Embedded in the ring soil samples was a second unusual organic material of higher molecular weight. This second substance was composed of white, crystal-like fibers. In other words, the results of the tests performed at the time were interesting but inconclusive, leaving several mysteries in their wake. "There seems to be," scientist Michael D. Swords writes, "no question that the surface soil was hydrophobic [resistant to wetting], luminescent, and anesthetic, but to what this can be attributed is still unknown."

In the late 1980s British chemist Erol A. Faruk conducted his own independent analyses of Delphos samples. He concluded that probably something unusual and potentially significant had occurred:

I would say that the data presented in this research do not lead to a definitive view on the origin of the Delphos ring. I would, however, still maintain that: (1) a simple hoax [as proposed by debunker Philip J. Klass] is almost certainly ruled out by the soil chemistry; (2) a fungal fairy-ring hypothesis [suggested as an explanation by some skeptics] leaves many questions unanswered; and (3) the model developed from the ring soil chemistry, and [from] characteristics that support the sighting of an unconventional aerial object, is the most tenable explanation for the ring—despite its implications.

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## DEMONOLOGY AND UFOS.

→ See Paranormal and Occult Theories about UFOs.

## DEXTER AND HILLSDALE SIGHTINGS.

→ See Project Blue Book.

## DR. X CASE

On May 13, 1958, X, who was serving in the French armed services in the Algerian war, stepped on a land mine and sustained serious injuries. Over the next few months he was transferred to various hospitals. Released in October, he suffered permanent disability on his body's right side. Serious muscle damage made standing for any period of time a difficult endeavor. His right foot could not carry any significant amount of weight, and continuing problems with his right hand nearly caused him to abandon his beloved piano-playing.

On October 29, 1968, X was chopping at a stump on his property in a village in the south of France, where he practiced as a physician. A slip of the axe led to a painful wound in the leg and a severed vein. X had it treated immediately, but the discomfort continued, and the swelling moved downward to his foot. He lay in bed, his leg extended, for four days. For the first two days he could not walk at all. By Friday, November 1, the swelling had begun to go down, but the pain went on.

X was awakened in the early morning hours of the second by the voice of his 14-month-old son. The child was making a *rho! rho!* sound that his father recognized as meaning something shiny. X hobbled to his son's room, where the boy stood in his crib pointing excitedly toward the window. Though the shutters were closed, through chinks X could see intermittent flashes of light. Since a storm was due to erupt imminently, X assumed they were due to lightning, though later, as

subsequent events forced him to reflect on the matter, he would realize that the lights were unconnected with thunder and were, moreover, flashing with a periodicity and frequency uncharacteristic of natural meteorological phenomena. He also became aware of a rushing sound above the house.

After going into the kitchen to fill his son's bottle with water, he walked into the living room, hoping to locate the source of a rattling that suggested a shutter had not been fully closed. He stood by the chimney shaft and listened, then concluded that the sound was coming from a room above the kitchen. He slowly climbed the stairs, and when he entered the room, he saw outside for the first time. Through a window he observed powerful flashes of light erupting every second or so. No thunder accompanied them. X opened the window and put his head out into the rain looking for the source. Whatever was causing the lights, it was not visible from that vantage.

So X went downstairs and into the living room again, then into the kitchen. The time, he noticed, was 3:55 a.m. Looking out the kitchen window, he still could not discern the source, which appeared to be too far to the right to be seen from his position. He went back to the living room and opened up a double door leading to a terrace. From there he could see out from his location on the side of a steep hill overlooking a plain scattered with small farms. On the other side of the plain, the steep hills resumed. To his right, and to his considerable surprise, two similar-looking, luminous, cylinder-shaped objects appeared.

The objects were silvery white on their upper halves, deep red on the lower. Each carried two antennas, a vertical one on the top, another at a 45-degree, left-leaning angle at the bottom. From the lower center of each, a vertical column of deep white light shone, falling behind a hill. The flashes that had initially drawn X's attention came from the antenna of the left object and an invisible point behind the second. X observed other exchanges of flashes between both the vertical and horizontal antennae. All of this took place in silence.

As the objects moved to the left, they aligned themselves perfectly and grew closer even as each continued moving. The spotlights now crossed each other, then became just one light. Two of the horizontal antennae touched briefly, and the flashing ceased, though the antennae remained themselves luminous. *Then the objects merged and became one object.* This enormous object stopped its leftward motion and moved straight in X's direction. He could now see that its bottom was divided into 11 roughly squared sections.

The UFO positioned itself vertically so that the beam, heretofore underneath it, shone directly on the balcony where X stood. He heard a bang, and the object was gone, leaving only a white, fleecy shape that soon disintegrated as the wind pushed it eastward. Immediately after the bang, a luminous white "thread" appeared where the center of the object had been. The "thread" shot upward and transformed briefly into a white dot, which also vanished with an explosive sound.



It was now 4:05. X wrote down every detail of the sighting and drew sketches of what he had seen. Then he woke his wife and told her the story. Suddenly she shouted, "Your leg!" Only then did it occur to him that as he had been talking, he was walking around excitedly, neither experiencing discomfort nor limping. The wound was healed, and the swelling was gone.

After the couple had returned to bed. X began talking in his sleep—something his wife had never heard him do before. He seemed to be talking about the UFO encounter. After he had spoken for some minutes, X turned on the light and began taking notes. He recorded this statement: "Contact will be re-established by falling down the stairs on November 2nd." Finally, at 7 a.m., he stopped speaking.

X did not revive until 2 p.m. His wife suggested, "You should write to Michel and ask him to come and see you." She meant Aimé Michel, the prominent French ufologist and a friend of the family. X's reply, however, indicated that he thought she meant a different Michel. Surprised, Mrs. X explained that she meant—of course—Aimé Michel. Why would he want to do that? X asked. Incredibly, he remembered nothing of the extraordinary events of less than 24 hours earlier. Even after his wife showed him his notes and sketches, the whole episode remained a blank.

When he fell down the stairs that afternoon, X was at a loss to explain how it happened. "I had the impression of a hook in my leg," he said. He hit his head, and at that moment he recovered his memory of the UFO incident.

**Sequel.** When Aimé Michel visited him on November 8, he noticed that his old friend had lost weight and looked drawn. That same day X began to feel cramps and pains in his umbilical region. They persisted until the seventeenth, until they turned into a continuous itching. A kind of rash was forming around the navel. By noon the next day it had become a perfectly geometrical isosceles triangle, 17 centimeters at the base and 14 to 15 centimeters on the sides. X associated this strange phenomenon with a vivid dream he had had on the night of November 13-14. He had dreamed of a triangular shape somehow associated with the UFO.

A dermatologist who examined the triangle soon afterwards was so puzzled that he wanted to report it to the Academy of Medicine. Desiring no publicity, X asked him not to do so. Then, on November 19-20, the same shape appeared overnight in his son's navel area.

According to Michel, who conducted an extensive investigation and brought outside medical experts into the case:

For over two years the abdominal triangle continued to be a recurrent phenomenon, reappearing at intervals of about three weeks (but varying from a simple triangle to a triple one), remaining visible for two or three days, then vanishing in a few hours and leaving no trace. When the triangle appeared on the abdomen of the father it generally came half-a-day later on the abdomen of the little boy. Its manner of disappearance on the child was the same as on the father.

Michel himself witnessed such a manifestation on the evening of November 1, 1969—the first anniversary of the incident. On his arrival just before dinner, Michel jokingly inquired if X had “some original piece of geometry on his navel.” X lifted his shirt to show that his stomach bore nothing out of the ordinary. Later, around 11, the Michels sat down to listen to X play the piano. He had hardly started to perform, however, when an expression of astonishment came over his face. He unbuttoned his shirt, glanced at his stomach, and declared, “It’s here. It’s beginning again.” Michel examined it closely. It was precisely outlined and looked, he thought, as if it had been caused by a mild sunburn.

The next morning, in Michel’s presence, X phoned his son’s grandparents, who were baby-sitting the youngster. The grandmother, audibly distressed, said she had just been about to call herself. While bathing the boy a few minutes earlier, she had been shocked to find a triangle-shaped mark around his navel.

X’s extraordinary healing and peculiar stigmata were medically documented and remain medical (and arguably ufological) mysteries. Michel, an intelligent, conscientious investigator of international reputation, never doubted the Xs’s sincerity, nor did others—whether scientists, physicians, psychologists, or ufologists—who interacted with them.

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## ESTIMATE OF THE SITUATION

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In late September or early October 1948, following their investigation of the July 24 **Chiles-Whitted sighting**, in which a cigar-shaped UFO nearly collided with an Eastern Airlines DC-3 over Montgomery, Alabama, personnel at **Project Sign**, the U.S. Air Force's first known UFO project, drafted an intelligence report, an "estimate of the situation."

The estimate of the situation was, according to **Edward J. Ruppelt**, who headed the later **Project Blue Book**, a "rather thick document with a black cover . . . printed on legal-sized paper. Stamped across the front were the words TOP SECRET." After reviewing reports from scientists, pilots, and other credible observers, it concluded that the best evidence indicated an extraterrestrial origin for UFOs. Its author was probably Sign's chief officer, Capt. Robert R. Sneider.

The report made its way through channels until it got to the highest levels of the Pentagon, where it generated a great deal of debate. Eventually Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg rejected it on the grounds that its authors had not proven their case. Some months later it was declassified, and all copies were ordered to be burned, though, Ruppelt noted, a "few copies, one of which I saw, were kept as mementos of the golden days of the UFOs." This turn of events caused proponents of interplanetary visitation to go out of official favor and to be



reassigned. Officers who considered UFOs to be misinterpreted mundane phenomena rose to power in **Project Grudge**, which replaced Sign.

No copies of this near-legendary document have surfaced since, though its existence has been confirmed by Dewey J. Fournet, Jr., who as an Air Force major in the Pentagon served as liaison with the official UFO project headquartered at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. Nonetheless, for years the Air Force denied that there ever had been such an estimation of the situation.

In the mid-1990s, when a coalition of the major American UFO groups purchased Ruppelt's papers, a draft copy of his important book, *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects* (1956), became available. It turned out that in his original version he had revealed what the estimate contained, though that description did not make it into the published edition. According to Ruppelt:

It concluded that UFOs were interplanetary. As documented proof, many unexplained sightings were quoted. The original UFO sighting by Kenneth Arnold [see **Arnold Sighting**]; the series of sightings from the secret Air Force Test Center, Muroc AFB [see **Muroc Air Base Sightings**]; the F-51 pilot's observation of a formation of spheres near Lake Mead; the report of an F-80 pilot who saw two round objects diving toward the ground near the Grand Canyon; and a report by the pilot of an Idaho National Guard T-6 trainer, who saw a violently maneuvering black object.

As further documentation, the report quoted an interview with an Air Force major from Rapid City AFB (now Ellsworth AFB) who saw twelve UFOs flying a tight diamond formation. When he first saw them they were high but soon they went into a fantastically high speed dive, leveled out, made a perfect formation turn, and climbed at a 30 to 40 degree angle, accelerating all the time. The UFOs were oval-shaped and brilliant yellowish-white.

Also included was one of the reports from the AEC's [Atomic Energy Commission's] Los Alamos Laboratory. The incident occurred at 9:40 a.m. on September 23, 1948. A group of people were waiting for an airplane at the landing strip in Los Alamos when one of them noticed something glint in the sun. It was a flat, circular object, high in the northern sky. The appearance and relative size was the same as a dime held edgewise and slightly tipped, about 50 feet away.

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EVERGLADES

CE2

## EVANS, HILARY.

→See Psychosocial Hypothesis.

## EVERGLADES CE2

James Flynn of East Fort Myers, Florida, set out on Friday, March 12, 1965, on an expedition deep into the Everglades, taking with him his four hunting dogs. Late on the evening of the fourteenth, the dogs spotted a deer and took off after it, disappearing from sight, though Flynn could still hear their barking. One returned, and he put it back in its cage. The others remained out of sight. Then Flynn heard what sounded like a shot. Alarmed, he got on his swamp buggy and drove as rapidly as possible—in other words, slowly—toward the animals. It was now around 1 a.m. on Monday, March 15.

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Flynn suddenly spotted a hovering object, shaped like a broad, upside-down cone, about 200 feet above cypress trees slightly over a mile away. After a short time it headed off in a northeasterly direction. Two or three minutes later it returned to its original position, hovered for five minutes, then went southwest at a rapid rate of speed. By the time it returned not long afterwards, Flynn was a quarter-mile away. He watched it disappear into a small knoll among the trees.

After glimpsing the object through the dense vegetation, Flynn picked up binoculars to get a better look. The enhanced view revealed it to be 25 feet high and twice that in diameter. Near the top four tiers of two-foot-square square windows emitted a yellowish glow. The UFO was metallic, made up of four-by-four plates that appeared to be held together with rivets. Around its base an orange-red glow extended downward and illuminated the ground some 75 feet around the rim.

Flynn wondered if this could be a secret device from Cape Canaveral. Finally, 40 minutes into the sighting, he decided to approach the craft and offer its presumed crew his assistance. As he walked toward it, he heard a deafening ringing sound. The dog howled in its cage and tried frantically to get out.



The object, he now could see, was hovering four feet off the ground. Two hundred yards away from it, he stopped the buggy and moved forward, waving his arms. A blast of counterclockwise-moving "wind" from the UFO nearly knocked him off his feet. Undeterred, Flynn resumed his trek. Seventy-five feet from the object, he waved his arms once more. They were still in the air when, from just under one of the windows, the UFO beamed a light like a "welder's torch." When it hit his forehead, it felt like a sledgehammer blow. Flynn blacked out a moment later.

At some point he regained consciousness. He was blind. He lay there for a considerable period of time until he recovered a small amount of vision in his left eye. By this time the sun was shining, and it was Tuesday morning. The ground above which the object had hovered was burned in a perfectly symmetrical circle. Around the edges of the circle, several of the cypress trees had scorch marks on them.

Flynn managed to get his dogs together, boarded the buggy, and made his way to the home of Henry Osceola, a Seminole Indian who lived in the swamp. Flynn arrived at home in East Fort Myers around noon on Wednesday. With his wife he went to the office of an ophthalmologist, Paul R. Brown. Dr. Brown would report:

Mr. Flynn seemed to be in quite an agitated state of mind at that particular time. He kept repeating over and over "I know you wont [sic] believe me, but this is what happened" and then he would begin to relate the same story.

When I examined him on 3/17/65 vision was 20/800 in the right eye and 20/60 in the left eye. Intraocular tension was 2 on the right and 6 on the left using the 5.5 gm weight on the Schiotz tonometer. Examination revealed a slight bruise over the right brow and right upper lid and there was some gross hyphemia on the right. I could not see the retina on the right. The left eye appeared to be normal.

Flynn was sent to Lee Memorial Hospital in Fort Myers, where he would remain for five days. Forty-eight hours after he had been admitted to the hospital, he was examined by Harvie J. Stipe, a physician who had known him for 25 years. Because Flynn's eyes were bandaged, Dr. Stipe was unable to look at them, but he did conduct a comprehensive physical examination. He wrote:

The only abnormal findings were neurological. No paralysis was noted, but the deep tendon reflexes of biceps, triceps, patellas and achilles were absent. Plantars and abdominal were absent, but cremasterics were present.

Mr. Flynn was observed carefully for several weeks. His reflexes gradually returned over a 5 day to 1 week period, but returned irregularly. The forehead was finally examined and presented a thickened area just above and medial to the right eye; in center of this area was a depressed, slightly abraded spot about 1 centimeter in diameter. Very

small amount of haematoma was noted across the right upper eye lid. There was never any mental confusion or evidence of hallucination.

About the fourth day in the hospital, Mr. Flynn complained of hearing reduction and numbness in arms and hands. This cleared in about 24 hours.

When last seen about 16 April 1965, approximately 4 weeks after the injury, Mr. Flynn was again checked. The abdominal reflexes were normal. The depressed area over the right eye was still present and prominent. He still has a cloudy vision of the right eye.

Deputy Robert Daubenspeck of the Lee County Sheriff's Department interviewed Flynn late Wednesday, March 17. He told the *Fort Myers News-Press* that Flynn possibly sustained the injury when he ran into an overhanging tree limb in his swamp buggy—a theory both Sheriff Flanders Thompson and *News-Press* editor William R. Spear rejected. In an editorial in the Friday edition of the newspaper, Spear had this to say:

Jimmy Flynn is a substantial citizen, a practical, down-to-earth type who has never been subject to hallucinations. When he says that a "sledgehammer blow" between the eyes that bruised his eyebrow and caused a vision impairment that now has him under treatment in the hospital came somehow from a huge cone-shaped object making a whirring noise and emitting a dazzling light that he encountered in a remote Everglades prairie, it is certain that he believes it; that he didn't consciously make it up.

The sheriff's office notified nearby Homestead Air Force Base. The base's intelligence officer, Col. Robin Lewis, promised an investigation. When Flynn was released from the hospital, the sheriff informed Homestead that Flynn would willingly accompany an Air Force investigator to the site. An unnamed officer said that first Flynn should go there himself and mark off the spot with lime so that it would be readily detectable.

On March 26 Flynn, accompanied by Stipe and Johnny and Eugene Prevatt, went to the site. The group found a burned circle 72 feet in diameter. The circle looked as if it had been swept completely clean; there were no leaves, twigs, limbs, or other matter inside it. Eight cypress trees were scorched from the top halfway to the ground. Two other cypress trees, though not burned, displayed fresh damage to bark 10 feet up. As Stipe recalled, "The marks were as if a heavy object in a straight line had slid down the trees about two feet and there stopped." The trees were "12 or 15 feet apart in the area underneath the burned circle of trees."

Though Flynn and his friends took soil and plant samples and sent them to Homestead, they were never acknowledged. To the best of Flynn's knowledge, the Air Force conducted no follow-up investigation. In 1967 Capt. Jon H. Adams,



Homestead's chief information officer, asserted that the base had no record of the incident.

On October 31, 1966, University of Arizona atmospheric physicist **James E. McDonald** interviewed Flynn by phone. Flynn expressed the view that the object he had encountered was probably a secret aircraft developed by the American military. "If I ever find out that thing is owned by the government," he said, "they're going to have to pay for a good eye I used to have and don't have now."

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## EXETER CE1

At around 2 a.m. on September 3, 1965, Norman Muscarello, 18, was hitchhiking near Kensington, New Hampshire, on his way home to Exeter a few miles to the north. Traffic was sparse, and the young man had been forced to walk much of the way. While passing an open field, he noticed five flashing red lights 100 feet from him. Blinking along a 60-degree arc, they were positioned over a house bordering the field. Powerful enough to illuminate the surrounding area, the lights apparently ran along the rim of a structure, not quite visible but seemingly 80 to 90 feet in diameter.

As Muscarello watched, the lights moved silently out over the sloping field. There they rose and fell with a "floating leaf" motion, sometimes disappearing briefly behind trees or a house. As he would later tell the Air Force, "Only one light would be on at a time. They were pulsating: one, two, three, four, five, four, three, two, one. They were so bright I could not distinguish a form to the object."

A sensation of sheer terror overwhelmed him when the lights suddenly moved toward him. When he dived into the ditch, the lights backed off, hovered over a house for a short time, and then retreated into the field. Muscarello leaped to his feet, raced to the house, and banged on the door, screaming for help. No one responded.

Just then he saw a northbound car. He dashed to the middle of the road and waved it down. The middle-aged couple in the car dropped him off at the Exeter police station at 2:24. Muscarello stormed inside in a distraught state and blurted out his story to the desk officer, Patrolman Reginald "Scratch" Toland. Toland was surprised. Muscarello, who had a reputation for toughness, was not easily shaken or frightened.

Toland radioed Officer Eugene F. Bertrand, Jr., then out on patrol, and asked him to come in to talk with Muscarello. As it happened, an hour and a half earlier, at 1 a.m., he had been on the Route 108 bypass when he saw a car stopped along the side of the road. Its occupant told him she was too upset to drive and was trying to regain her composure. A huge object with flashing red lights had followed her all the way from Epping (12 miles northwest of Exeter) at a distance of no more than a few feet. When she reached the overpass, the object had risen abruptly and disappeared into the night sky.

Bertrand thought she was a "kook," as he put it. Nonetheless her fear was real enough, and he stayed with her for 15 minutes until she was ready to go on.

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The significance of her story did not strike him until he heard Muscarello recount his own terrifying encounter. His curiosity aroused, Bertrand offered to take him back to the site. At a few minutes before 3, the two arrived at the field along Route 150. From the patrol car they saw nothing out of the ordinary. Bertrand reported as much to Toland, who suggested that he stroll out into the field just to be sure all was normal.

So Bertrand and Muscarello ventured into the darkness, the officer shining his flashlight through the distant trees as they walked. Maybe Muscarello had seen a helicopter, Bertrand suggested, but the young man insisted he knew what a helicopter looked like, and he knew about other kinds of conventional airplanes, and this was like none of them. The two had gone some 50 feet from the road when horses in a nearby corral suddenly began to kick the sides of the barn and to whinny as if in fear. Dogs howled. Muscarello screamed, "I see it!"

Bertrand stared out at the trees beyond the corral and watched in shock at the sudden appearance of "this huge, dark object as big as that barn over there, with red flashing lights on it." The object "barely cleared" a 60- to 70-foot-high pine tree as it came toward them at a tilt, swaying back and forth all the while. Reflexively Bertrand dropped on one knee, yanked his .38 revolver out of its holster, and aimed it toward the object, which looked "bright red with sort of a halo



effect." On second thought Bertrand decided it would not be a good idea to shoot. He grabbed Muscarello, who was paralyzed with fear, and led him toward the car.

From there they observed the object as it hovered 100 feet away and at 100 feet altitude. It rocked back and forth. The pulsating red lights flashed in rapid sequence, first from right to left, then left to right, each cycle consuming no more than two seconds. Bertrand had already alerted another officer, David Hunt, who said he was on his way. Over the next few minutes, as they awaited Hunt's arrival, they watched the object hover. The animals continued to act agitated.

Then the object started to move slowly and erratically in the direction of Hampton. "It darted," Bertrand remembered. "It could turn on a dime. Then it would slow down." By now Hunt was there and seeing it, too. He would tell writer John G. Fuller:

I could see that fluttering movement. It was going from left to right, between the tops of two big trees. I could see those pulsating lights. I could hear those horses kicking out in the barn there. Those dogs were really howling. Then it started moving, slow-like, across the tops of the trees, just above the trees. It was rocking when it did this. A creepy type of look. Airplanes don't do this. After it moved out of sight, toward Hampton, toward the ocean, we waited awhile. A B-47 came over. You could tell the difference. There was no comparison.

After Bertrand and Hunt returned to the station to write up their reports, Toland got a call from a local night operator. She had just spoken, she said, with a badly frightened, almost incoherent man who claimed a flying saucer had been chasing him. In fact, it was still in sight. When she tried to connect him with the Exeter police, she lost the call. She had then traced it to an outdoor phone booth in Hampton. Toland notified the Hampton police immediately, and Bertrand and Hunt went out looking for him (even checking the hospital), but the witness was never located.

**Explanations on parade.** When he arrived at work at 8 a.m., Exeter Police Lt. Warren Cottrell found Bertrand's terse 11-sentence report on the dramatic events of six and five hours earlier. Cottrell called Pease Air Force Base several miles north of Exeter, at Portsmouth. At 1 p.m. Maj. David H. Griffin and Lt. Alan Brandt arrived from the air base. They interviewed Bertrand, Hunt, and Muscarello and visited the site. At one point in the conversation, they asked the witnesses not to tell the press about their experience. It was too late, however. A reporter from the *Manchester Union Leader* had learned of their sighting minutes after its occurrence and had interviewed them even before they went home.

The next week Massachusetts ufologist Raymond E. Fowler, an investigator for the Washington-based **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP), arrived in Exeter and commenced what would be the most thorough investigation, surpassing the Air Force's perfunctory efforts and the arm-

chair labors of subsequent would-be debunkers. Shortly after his interviews with the principals, Maj. Griffin forwarded a brief report, plus statements from the three, to **Project Blue Book** at Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton, Ohio, concluding:

[A]t this time I have been unable to arrive at a probable cause of this sighting. The three observers seem to be stable, reliable persons, especially the two patrolmen. I viewed the area of the sighting and found nothing in the area that could be the probable cause. Pease AFB had five B-47 aircraft flying in the area during this period but I do not believe that they had any connection with this sighting.

Before Blue Book had even been sent this analysis from the only Air Force representative (along with his fellow Pease officer) who had actually conducted any field investigation, the Pentagon in Washington was already informing the press that the witnesses had seen nothing more than "stars and planets twinkling" owing to a temperature inversion. Then Blue Book weighed in with its own explanation:

Big Blast *Coco*, a SAC/NORAD training mission[,] was flown on 2-3 September, 1965. By 03/0430Z, the operational portion of the mission was complete. . . . The town of Exeter is within the traffic pattern utilized by Air Traffic Control in the recovery of these aircraft at Pease AFB, N.H. During their approach the recovering aircraft would have been displaying standard position lights, anti-collision lights, and possibly over-wing and landing lights.

In a November letter to Bertrand and Hunt, Blue Book head Maj. Hector Quintanilla, Jr., mentioned "Big Blast" as a "possible" explanation, though a "final evaluation" of the sighting had yet to be made. He wrote:

In addition to aircraft from this operation, there were five (5) B-47 aircraft flying in the area during this period. . . . Since there were many aircraft in the area, at the time, and there were no reports of unidentified objects from personnel engaged in this air operation, we might then assume that the objects observed between midnight and two a.m. might be associated with this military air operation. If, however, these aircraft were noted by either of you, this would tend to eliminate this air operation as a possible explanation for the objects observed.

In a December 2 letter written by Bertrand but signed by both, the witnesses responded:

[A]s you might imagine, we have been the subject of considerable ridicule since the Pentagon released its "final evaluation" of our sighting of September 3, 1965. In other words, both Patrolman Hunt and myself [sic] saw this object at close range, checked it out with each other, confirmed and reconfirmed the fact that this was not any kind of conventional aircraft, that it was at an altitude of not more than a couple of hundred feet[,] and went to considerable trouble to confirm that

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the weather was clear, there was no wind, no chance of weather inversion, and that what we were seeing was in no way a military or civilian craft. We entered this in a complete official police report as a supplement to the blotter of the morning of September 3rd (not September 2 as your letter indicates). Since our job depends on accuracy and the ability to tell the difference between fact and fiction, we were naturally disturbed by the Pentagon report issued which attributed the sighting to "multiple high-altitude objects in area" and "weather inversion." What is a little difficult to understand is that your letter arrived considerably after the Pentagon release. Since your letter says that you are still in the process of making a final evaluation, it seems that there is an inconsistency here. Ordinarily, this would not be too important except for the fact that in a situation like this, we are naturally very reluctant to be considered irresponsible in our official report to the police station. One of us (Patrolman Bertrand) was in the Air Force for four years, engaged in refueling operations, with all kinds of military aircraft; it was impossible to mistake what we saw for any kind of military operation, regardless of altitude. It was also definitely not a helicopter or balloon. Immediately after the object disappeared, we did see what probably was a B-47 at high altitudes, but it bore no relation to the object that we saw.

Another fact is that the time of our observation was nearly an hour after two a.m. which would eliminate the Air Force Operation Big Blast since as you say, this took place between midnight and two a.m. Norman Muscarello, who first reported this object before we went to the site, saw it somewhere in the vicinity of two a.m. but nearly an hour had passed before he got to the police station and we went out to the location with him.

After not hearing from Quintanilla, the officers sent a follow-up letter on December 29. They again disputed the official explanations:

It is important to remember that this craft that we saw was not more than one hundred feet in the air and it was absolutely silent with no rush of air from jets or chopper blades whatever. And it did not have any wings or tail. It lit up the entire field, and two nearby houses turned completely red. It stopped, hovered, and turned on a dime. . . .

Some weeks later Lt. Col. John Spaulding, from the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, responded: "Based on additional information submitted to our UFO Investigation Officer, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, we have been unable to identify the object that you observed on September 3, 1965."

**Sequel.** The Muscarello/Bertrand/Hunt sighting became the focus of a popular book, *Incident at Exeter* (1966), written by John G. Fuller. The attention ensured that this particular CE1 would be remembered in a way few have been.

If one man is to be believed, the most interesting aspect of the story remains hidden by official secrecy. On December 3, 1982, Robert Mark, the Hampton chief of police, told ufologists Lawrence Fawcett and Barry Greenwood of an incident said to have taken place on the night of the Exeter sighting. At the time Mark, assigned to the 509th Security Police Squadron at Pease, was a sergeant in the Air Force.

It was about 12 a.m. when I and two other airmen were at the Main gate to Pease. One of the airmen yelled, "Look at that!" I turned around to see an object drop out of the star-filled sky. It was coming straight towards the guard shack at an altitude of about 300 to 400 feet. The lights were approaching at a very fast rate of speed. What I saw as the object was coming straight on, was what looked like two headlights that were very bright.

As the object passed over the lighted areas of the base, the lights would go out as if someone were breaking the bulbs as they went by. It passed directly over the guard shack, but the men could not hear a sound, only the wind. When I first saw the two bright headlights drop out of the sky and come towards the shack, I thought it was a B-52 approaching, but this was dismissed when there was no sound whatsoever.

One of the airmen ran for the shack and grabbed the red hotline phone, which is a direct to CSC [Central Security Control]. He began crying and yelling into the phone about what he was seeing. Then he dropped to his knees and lost all control of himself. I had to grab the phone away from him and shake the airman, telling him to control himself, that the thing was not going to kill him. As this was going on, the object headed towards the north end of Pease. When it flew over, the lights there went out also. They remained out for about 30 to 40 seconds, then came back on. The whole area was black when the object passed over.

Mark said the object's lights were so bright that beyond seeing an oblong shape, he could not make out its contours. Two jets were sent to intercept it, but the UFO would shoot away every time the aircraft seemed to be gaining.

A number of Exeter-area witnesses in the late summer and fall of 1965 reported seeing interceptors pursuing UFOs. One woman told Fuller:

On the 17th of September . . . we were going up to Exeter. This thing with red, green and white lights on it stopped over a house. We watched it for two or three minutes, and then a jet plane came. And when it did, every single light on the object went out. The plane went by, and the lights came on again. The plane came back, and the lights went out. Then the object went off, and the plane remained there circling and recircling the spot.

One night in October, while he was in the area collecting reports for his book, Fuller, in the company of three others, had this sighting:



I looked and saw a reddish-orange disk, about one-fifth the size of a full moon. It was about three or four plane lengths in front of the jet, which appeared to be a fighter. The plane was moving as if in hot pursuit. The disk was perfectly round, dull orange more than red. It was luminous, glowing, incandescent. The plane was not closing the distance between it and the object. We followed both the plane and the objects for 18 or 20 seconds until they disappeared below the southeasterly horizon.

All the while Pease AFB resolutely denied that its jets were chasing UFOs. There is no record of such attempted intercepts in Blue Book or other Air Force documents. Somebody, it appears, is not telling the truth.

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## EXTRATERRESTRIAL BIOLOGICAL ENTITIES.

→See Dark Side.

## EXTRATERRESTRIAL HYPOTHESIS AND SCIENCE

From the earliest years of the modern (post-World War II) UFO phenomenon, the extraterrestrial hypothesis (ETH) has been a major part of discussions on the subject. When the U.S. Air Force wished to formalize information collected on UFO sightings, it created a set of guidelines for its intelligence operatives. This was the first *Draft of Collection Memorandum* in October 1947. Intelligence agents were informed as follows about the flying-disc problem:

This strange object, or phenomenon, may be considered, in view of certain observations, as long-range aircraft capable of a high rate of climb, high cruising speed and highly maneuverable and capable of being flown in very tight formation. For the purpose of analysis and evaluation of these so-called "flying saucers," the object sighted is being assumed to be a manned craft of unknown origin. While there remains the possibility of Russian manufacture, based on the perspective thinking and actual accomplishments of the Germans, it is the considered opinion of some elements that the object may in fact represent an interplanetary craft of some kind.

The ETH is a natural concept to occur to anyone seriously looking at the UFO phenomenon. The very first serious lookers, at the Pentagon, arrived at it almost immediately.

Still, the ETH finds itself under continuing, sometimes emotional attack. The attack comes from everywhere: inside ufology and out, from laypersons and scientists. Because the hypothesis is so naturally arrived at, this negative environment is intriguing. An essay much larger than this one should be written to try to analyze that peculiarity. This essay will try to answer a simpler question: does science support or oppose the ETH? We will address ourselves not to those persons labeled scientists but to the more objective information of science which they claim to honor.

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*A. Are there many extraterrestrials, or are there none?*

The ETH in its barest form may be said to be composed of the following parts: (1) Extraterrestrial Intelligences (ETI) have arisen elsewhere in the universe, probably many times in many places in our galaxy alone. (2) Some form of technological civilization has advanced to the point at which interstellar travel is possible (again, probably many times). (3) Such travelers, or at least their contrivances, have arrived here and are pursuing their mission in a somewhat covert fashion.

This section of the essay will address point #1 of the ETH.

Since no survey of potential life-forming worlds has been accomplished by our species, the simple scientific answer to the question in the sentence heading is: we don't know. That answer is fine by the ufologists. It says: the possibilities are open; cut out the giggles and emotions, and let's get on with the research. Being human, we don't seem to be able to do this effectively, however. We insist on speculating, and acting, on our best information. If we must do this, then what answer does science give to the question of the existence of ETI?

The answer is powerfully in favor of point #1 of the ETH. And, in fact, nearly the entire academic community now supports it. The deductive argument rising from star counts, planetary-system and planet-formation theories, life zones, and life origin and advancement concepts draws emotional strength from our awareness



of the size and magnificence of the universe. Few educated people hold out against it, though there is a vocal minority, "The School of One."

The argument is complex and long, but now so often heard that a thumbnail sketch should suffice. In our galaxy alone there are upwards of 250 billion stars. Even when we leave out the environmentally unfriendly galactic nucleus and the heavy-element-poor galactic halo, our galactic disc still contains about 100 billion candidate stars. Some of them, a minority, are so short-lived that sufficient evolutionary times for developing advanced life are unlikely. Many other stars, a majority, are so small and cool that their planets would have to be placed dangerously close to receive water-liquefying heat. The danger resides in becoming gravitationally locked (one face always toward the star) and damaged by solar flares. Even when we eliminate these two star types as poor candidates, there seem to be more than 10 billion proper suns in the galaxy.

Prior to the modern era of UFOs, the formation of planetary systems was felt to be rare. Almost coincident with the upsurge of reports, thinking in astronomy changed. Nearly everyone now thinks, on the basis of commonplace evolutionary events due to gravity, collisions, and chemistry, that planet formation should be the norm. In the mid-1990s the astronomy community has at last recognized the direct detection of planets around several nearby stars. Even double stars, once thought to be too unstable for planets to form, seem now to be good hosts as well. Billions of planetary systems are suspected around our galaxy's sunlike stars.

The way in which planets are arrayed within such systems is thought to be of a standard pattern: small rocky terrestrials near the star and large solid-cored gas balls farther out. This pattern emerges from gravitation and simulations of the condensation of systems from the elemental contents of the pre-solar dust clouds from which they arise. The dust clouds should be quite similar in the ratios of their chemical elements and to some degree have been measured, spectroscopically, to be so. With similar forces and materials at work, planets should be similar, chemically and physically, to those in our own system.

This developmental view becomes even more intriguingly patterned when one realizes that the terrestrial (earthlike) planets closer to their suns experience an early atmosphere-stripping by a highly energetic solar phase (the "T-Tauri stage"), wherein an extraviolent solar wind blows their primordial (hydrogen- and helium-dominated) atmospheres away. The naked proto-earths then must reconstitute new atmospheres from universal chemical processes working upon common molten minerals. Some additional useful chemicals will rain in from space to add to the boiling soup. These proto-earths find themselves as roughly earth-sized terrestrial (rocky) bodies at roughly earth-sized distances from their suns, boiling up a new carbon dioxide, steam, and nitrogen-filled atmosphere produced by universal chemistry. To be a legitimate long-term life-bearer, the pattern must grow even tighter. The favored planet must find itself placed at a precise distance from its sun wherein it can maintain a long-term liquid water environment; and it must be an

object in a certain mass range to retain sufficient atmosphere. Whereas such matches of proper planets to life zones were once thought highly unlikely, the current simulations suggest that life zones are much wider than suspected and that most systems ought to contain one earthlike life-bearer. And some should have two. Our little brother Mars apparently just missed being so blessed in our own system.

Given this situation of a common chemistry operating in a common fluid (water), and within a common force environment, today's biochemists (calling themselves "cosmochemists" and "protobiologists") suspect that simple life systems will arise like a shot. Our earth exploded into life almost as soon as it cooled down enough to allow it. Why not on other similarly favored planets? An actual data-point on this issue may be obtained if we ever get to Mars to do a serious search. If so, we could well discover that the early Mars also bore simple life in its first billion years. Half a data-point already exists in that studies of meteorites reveal that chemistry spontaneously makes important chemical units (amino acids, purines, pyrimidines) in space itself without the benefit of a planetary environment. These units may string together in an appropriate terrestrial fluid environment to create vital polymers (proteins, nucleic acids). In 1996 revelations by NASA indicated that a meteorite, strongly suspected to have been ejected from Mars, contains structured inclusions reminiscent of the shapes of early earth bioforms. Though controversial, this indicates that the evolution of life on Mars occurred sometime in the distant past.

Once life forms on a world in the continuously habitable zone, almost no one believes in anything other than a continued advance in complexity. Though the trick of piecing together advanced eukaryotic cells and multicellular organisms seems, at least on our own planet, to be a tough puzzle (three billion or so years in the solving), once past this barrier the process of forming rich ecologies and ever more fascinating life forms should be unleashed. If given enough time and evolutionary runs at it, not only advancement but high intelligence should result. (Intelligence is one of the most powerful survival characteristics employable in the struggle for existence.) Any world circling a sunlike star with enough time in the habitable zone should develop advanced intelligence, and if the habitat is terrestrial (rather than aquatic), that intelligence should flourish into a materials-manipulating technical civilization.

This view represents the conclusion of the SETIans, the part of the academic community interested in the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence by radio telescope. It is a view agreed to by the vast majority of academics and laypersons. The galaxy is brimming with ETI. Some may have destroyed themselves long ago; some may still be fairly primitive, or even yet to come; but many are there. Somewhere.

### *B. Can you get here from there?*

"Experts" on this topic break down into three camps: those who think that interstellar travel is impossible or so difficult that it might as well be; those who think that it will be difficult but not a barrier for eventual attempts; and those who



think it may not be difficult at all once science and technology progress. Of course, none of these people (including this writer) know what they are talking about. And this admission of ignorance is also fine with the ufologist, because it says, or *should* say, to the academic scientist: since we don't know about this yet, we'll naturally keep an objective open mind, won't we? Well, "naturally" we don't.

The schools of thought on the space-travel issue break down in a surprising manner. The ET-enthusiast SETI researchers tend to believe that travel is impossible or essentially so. The ET-hating School of One (which holds that only human beings exist) tends to believe that we will travel and flood the galaxy, and then the entire universe. Here most ufologists transfer their previous alliance with the SETIans over to the engineering-oriented School of One. By doing so, the ufologists have once again taken the intuitively and publicly popular position. Even more satisfyingly, it seems to be the position most defensible.

Though no one has flown to Alpha Centauri, several clever futurists have shown us on paper how we might well do so. A great variety of schemes using nuclear-fusion engines, often in concert with gravitational slingshot effects from the sun and the larger planets, have been mathed out. The British Interplanetary Society (with many of its leaders in the School of One mode of opinion) has made elaborate designs for a Starprobe called Daedalus, based on fusion power. Other devices use huge scoops to pull in the thin hydrogen between the stars, as a somewhat doubtful get-as-you-go fuel supply. Though most SETIans and astronomers remain in denial, most other people who examine these schemes admit that some of them seem to offer a chance at travel after all.

The deniers often cite the impossibility of fuel mass to payload ratios, limited speeds, and vast distances. Perhaps the analogy is unfair, but their arguments ring with almost identical tone to the opinions on "local" space travel by astronomer Richard vander Riet Wooley. While reviewing a book by P. E. Cleator on such travel in 1936, he said:

The whole procedure [of shooting rockets into space] presents difficulties of so fundamental a nature, that we are forced to dismiss the notion as essentially impracticable, in spite of the author's insistent appeal to put aside prejudice and to recollect the supposed impossibility of heavier-than-air flight before it was actually accomplished.

This reasoning process is quite odd. Our astronomer is saying that even though Cleator is warning him to learn from history, and he understands the warning, forget it. Well, that was 1936. Great Britain forgave and forgot as well and named Wooley the Astronomer Royal. This gave him the opportunity to set the quintessential standard for Wooley thinking when he stated in 1956, "Space travel is utter bilge." When space travel started (with Sputnik) two years later, the British naturally placed Wooley on their advisory commission on space research. One wonders if he denied the existence of the commission.

The ever ingenious Robert Forward has drawn up schema to reach the stars by an entirely different mode of power: space-based solar power stations. The radiant force of the station's output on a space vehicle (which is largely formed like a huge webbed antenna) would move the craft like a sail propelled by the wind, and at tremendous speeds. Though Forward has sketched out gigantic personnel-carrying devices, he also imagines much smaller probes. Such a "cheap" interstellar device would, if outfitted with micro-miniaturized ultra-technology, allow a completely different exploration scenario. In this concept civilizations could send out cheap starprobes that when arriving at another solar system would activate not only their sensors and radio senders but also nano-technology machines. These devices would use local materials and energy to build macroscopic structures such as craft, machines, robotics, and whatever else was programmed into their explorative and manipulative agenda.

The simple Forward Starwisp Probe seems doable as a mere sensing and signaling device far more quickly than the fusion starships. Nano-technology is a current rage. Who knows how fast and far it will progress? Artificial intelligence and robotics are in similar stages. Who is to say no? And all this is mere building on what we already know rather well. In two centuries it may be little above the catapult and the stirrup. Wormholes, hyperspace, and other exotics may lie under the next rock we kick over in the labs. If we want to go to the stars, someday we will. If the stars want to come to us, that too will occur. Even prominent SETIans have spent computer time imagining ETs spreading in colonization waves, star by star, across the Milky Way. Point #2 of the ETH is strongly in its favor.

### *C. Where are they?*

Enrico Fermi's comment on all this may be pure folklore, but it doesn't matter. The point is sound. Allegedly Fermi considered the hugeness of galactic starcounts and the great likelihood of other, older intelligence, and he asked, with the builder-explorer's intuition that sooner or later they would take the great leap between the stars, where are they? There has been much more than enough time. They should be there. This puzzlement—that "they" should be all over the place; yet where are they?—is the Fermi Paradox.

Different groups answer the paradox in the way that suits them. The astronomers and the SETIans say, see, we told you that you can't get from one star to another. The School-of-One explorers say, see, we told you we're alone in the universe. And the ufologists stand around dumbfounded trying to get someone to pay attention.

Let us look for a moment at a simple diagram of what we have been discussing. It brings us to the nub of the ETH and the Fermi Paradox.

The school of SETI resides, with most astronomers, in the upper-right-hand corner. Medievalists, those who believe in nothing that is not hitting them in the face at the moment, are in the upper left. The engineering-oriented "Humanity con-



No ETs	Lots of ETs	
Medievalists	SETIans	Interstellar Travel impos- sible or near so
School of One	*	Interstellar Travel doable

quers the universe” group is in the lower left. So who is in the lower right? It is not just ufologists. A large portion of the academic community and the educated public are there; so probably is an easy majority of the aware citizenry. From what we know of science, technology, and history, it may well be the most defensible place to be.

Ufology’s problem is not where it stands on the two major belief issues. Ufology’s problem is explaining why its phenomena are not more overt, if the extraterrestrial hypothesis is to be taken as a serious option. Theoretically ufology, as an objective field of study, should not be required to fight for the respectability of the ETH, since that hypothesis is only one of many concepts that have been applied to UFOs. But ufology and the ETH have grown so intimately together, and so reasonably so, that ufology cannot shake the ETH even if it wished to do so. Researchers, therefore, often find themselves arguing not only that the phenomena are mysterious but also that the phenomena are the best available solution to the Fermi Paradox.

But if so, why the covertness? Many speculative scenarios have been presented to rationalize this shyness of the phenomena under the terms of the ETH. Those do not have to be detailed here. Human imagination is fully up to the task of describing plausible reasons why we might see no more of the UFO phenomenon than we do. But one, possibly analogous, is perhaps worth mentioning. Our Mars exploration scientists have asked themselves what we should do if we discover even primitive biology there. The consensus: Leave it alone; don’t contaminate it; study it as best we can while not significantly interfering.

*D. Do UFO reports clash with science?*

We have discovered the ETH from the outside, the scientific feasibility of the concept, its fit within the general matrix of accepted knowledge. That fit is a tight one. But do UFO observations, as reported, clash with science in other ways? Such arguments are made, of course. They, however, seem to rely on intuition and

vague reasoning, rather than facts. The anti-ET arguments take this form: This claimed action is impossible; this would never happen; this appearance violates some "law" (i.e., opinion). What can we say about these assaults?

Let us take on, again too briefly, one of the this-is-impossible statements, usually made by intelligent individuals but ones who feel that speculation (without any real analytical work) is sufficient in these matters.

We have all been intrigued by reports of **close encounters of the third kind** wherein UFO occupants are observed. The anti-ETH impossibilists have reduced nearly all of these cases to absurdity with a masterful stroke of logic. No independently evolved intelligences could breathe our air, nor we theirs. Since the occupants are rarely equipped with breathing devices, all such stories are lies, hallucinations, mental aberrations, or at least not ETI in nature. At first hearing this may sound reasonable. Upon examination, however, the opinion turns out to be based on what all such opinions are based: an unthought-out "common knowledge." The apparent logic of the surmise seems so convincing, so valid, that the speculator uttering it feels no need to think about it much. It is intuition, not science at all. It is a bit frightening that the speculators and their academic listeners do not seem to realize what they are doing. They are blinded against the need for a deeper intelligent analysis by the good feeling it gives them. Because it is largely unconscious, it is a most dangerous form of pseudoscience.

The earlier part of this essay described the restricted similarities of the terrestrial life-zone worlds from which technological species would come. These similarities involved mass, energy flux, energy types, and—most significantly—chemistry. All these factors determine the ways that atmospheres form on terrestrial planets, and the patterns are very much the same. Governed by universal chemistry and chemical-element distributions, the secondary atmospheres of terrestrial planets should be dominated by three constituents: water vapor, carbon dioxide, and nitrogen. Very minor components of other gases should play a role. The life-zone worlds will use their water vapor to create seas and cleanse their skies of heat-trapping CO<sub>2</sub>. This leaves behind a relatively clean nitrogen atmosphere. As will be shown shortly, this element must be joined by significant amounts of oxygen to produce a world capable of developing advanced technology and spacecraft. An oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere. Similar, but how similar to our own? Breathing is, after all, a touchy thing.

The answer to the degree of similarity may come from considering the UFO-ETH question from the other end. If an extraterrestrial sails here in a spacecraft, that act says a lot to us. It says that this is a being who pilots an amazing device. The device was not found lying around in nature but is technically molded from amazing non-natural materials. These materials were produced from much simpler, raw materials that passively reside in nature. The creation of this device was one pinnacle of a long history of materials-manipulating technology, wherein the control of the forces and elements of their world was hard-won over centuries. Once,



very long ago, these technological giants were mere primitives with none of these skills to face their battle for survival in the natural world. What, other than banging the rocks together, began their ascent to high technology?

Because there are so few basic forces to work with in our universe, there is only one beginning to these odysseys. The manipulation of matter begins with *fire*. Fire takes “useless” natural materials (at low energy states) and begets metals, ceramics, and advanced chemicals. Then we can manipulate these powerful materials to invent electrical and nuclear civilizations. There is no leap-frogging fire. This ET spacecrafter mastered fire and materials science long ago. And its world, therefore, *allowed* fire. That is a realization filled with consequences. What are the consequences for our alien’s atmospheric components?

Though several elements can serve as oxidants in combustion, the universe overwhelmingly favors us with one: oxygen. Even should the science-fictionists insist on worlds with nasty chlorine-breathers and the like, there is little chance that our space traveler originates there. Such aliens must first exist at all (and there are all sorts of biochemical reasons why they probably do not), and their world must be dense enough in (relatively) rare free chlorine gas to light their fires. Chlorine has hundreds of times less universal presence than oxygen. In our life-zone worlds, which element is more likely to predominate biochemically?

The atmosphere of any high technology-generating world is almost surely dominated by oxygen and its near-inert cousin, nitrogen. Carbon dioxide must be almost gone to avoid a Venuslike greenhouse death. Oxygen, nitrogen, and traces of the others: these are the atmospheres. And it is oxygen in an unsuspectedly narrow range. It must be at a density that allows easy maintenance of the fires, and less than that at which accidental fires cannot be put out. We humans can, and do, breathe all across that range. Would ET be less well adapted? Even if we admit that it is *possible* that ET might labor with our slightly different mix, see how far a depth analysis of the argument has brought us. It no longer is obvious that ET could not breathe our air. In fact, it might be likely that neither of us would be hampered at all.

The anti-ETH argument for atmosphere incompatibility has failed in spite of its feeling of validity. Though we had no assurance that it would fail, it should come as little surprise. A feeling of validity is only pseudoscience when it is dressed up in scientific garb. We have not *proven* anything here. We have merely indicated that debunking negativists have been sloppy with their assertions. The potential for compatible atmospheres seems good, but it is not certain.

A similar situation has arisen with the “impossible problem” that most UFO occupants are describing as having humanoid body plans (two legs, two arms with hands, a tube torso with a head at one end, a face with things more or less in the right places). This, we are informed by learned-sounding anti-ETHers, is, of course, impossible. It is impossible for independently evolved life forms to end up looking even remotely like us. Evolution is, after all, totally and utterly random. This conclusion seems valid. It feels good. It must be true.

Even a superficial analysis of the humanoid problem takes a lot longer than the incompatible-air issue and so cannot be addressed reasonably here. It has been addressed elsewhere, however, and interested readers are encouraged to pursue it there. Briefly, the analysis involves the ways that basic physics, and even geometry, force certain essential patterns to arise (the multicellular moving tube with its broken top/bottom and front/back symmetries, leaving only right/left symmetry operative). It requires "head" ends packed with central processing units and bilateral sensors. For numbers, it evokes nature's powerful risks-versus-benefits game: tolerating no important redundancies, and discovering and rediscovering the most powerful survival designs time and again. Are mutations random? Yes. Are successful survival designs random? No. This analysis is applicable even to the constituents and arrangements of the humanoid face. Perhaps this should have been no surprise. Almost all large earth creatures have them. And absolutely *all* of us advanced land-dwellers do. And it is the land-dwellers who make the fires.

*E. How do we study the evidence for the ETH?*

Of the scientific objections to the ETH, only one survives this analysis. It is not that current knowledge forbids ETI or its travel here. As we have seen, current knowledge actually favors it. It is not that ETI doesn't breathe or look as it ought to. Those objections, examined carefully, prove pseudoscientific. And it is not that ETs have not landed on the White House lawn (or some similarly incontrovertible event). All that is the musing of speculators inventing behaviors for entities with agendas about which we know nothing.

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The only worthy objection to the ETH is that there is little or nothing *upon which to do science* in a traditional physical-sciences mode. This is a problem that the Air Force's **Project Blue Book** had, the **University of Colorado UFO Project** had, and ufologists have. It is a real problem but perhaps not an impossible one. There seems to be a kind of evidence here and there, difficult to fix and measure but there nevertheless. It is a hard job. Perhaps it is forgivable that academics do not want to try. What is not forgivable is their calling upon alleged impossibles, without science, without analysis, and with only an intuitive good feeling to go on. The ETH is not impossible. It may even be likely. It is at least an open question, and a hypothesis sufficient to explain ufology's most resistant mysteries. —*Michael D. Swords*

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## EXTRATERRESTRIAL HYPOTHESIS AND UFOLOGY

Ufology begins with **Charles Fort** (1874-1932), the first writer to collate widely scattered reports of anomalous aerial phenomena and discern a larger pattern in them. Yet before Fort, before ufology, others had wondered, at least passingly, about the possible presence of alien visitors in the earth's atmosphere. The idea gave rise to a number of **hoaxes**, journalistic and otherwise, including a **crash/retrieval** tale set (according to the French newspaper *La Pay*) in 1864 America. Another hoax had an "air vessel belonging originally to some other planet" plowing into a remote Nebraska river bank in June 1884. During the 1896-97 rash of **airship sightings** in the United States, crash yarns (most enduringly, one alleging the collision of a Martian spaceship with a Texas windmill) and tall tales about otherworldly airship pilots filled newspapers.

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A pre-ufology version of the extraterrestrial hypothesis (ETH) appears in a letter published in the midst of the wave. Writing in Tennessee's *Clarksville Daily Leaf-Chronicle* (April 17, 1897), Adam Oldham suggested that Martians, traveling at "the speed of electricity," had journeyed from the red planet to ours. "The visitors . . . evidently fear to land among strange peoples who may be barbarous in their view," he wrote, "and therefore seem to be reconnoitering, and examining the country here and there before landing."

Speculation of this sort peaked in 1897. Subsequent airship waves, such as the worldwide one in 1909, sparked little talk of extraterrestrial visitors. Space travelers were edged out by secret inventors and foreign spies in public suspicion. A rare dissent was voiced by New Zealander Robert Grigor, who in a letter to the *Otago Daily Times* (July 29, 1909) advanced the view that "atomic-powered spaceships" from Mars could be responsible for the objects his countrymen were reporting.

**Fort's ETH.** Born in 1874 in Albany, New York, Charles Hoy Fort worked as a journalist and editor in New York City and Long Island. After traveling the world, he settled in New York with his new wife and commenced a literary career. He was drawn ever more deeply into library searches for material on natural and behavioral anomalies.



Fort's first attempt to write about such things was in something he called *X*, apparently composed at some point between 1910 and 1915. It never saw print, and Fort subsequently destroyed it. Apparently *X* theorized that Martians secretly control the human race—a “crank book,” Fort's biographer Damon Knight surmises. A sequel, *Y*, also unpublished, also destroyed, seems to have been more of the same, only this time Fort located a villainous supercivilization at the South Pole.

After these two failed efforts Fort found his own voice in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), written with the distinctive blend of mocking humor, penetrating insight, and calculated outrageousness that soon would be defined as “Fortean.” In this and two other books, *New Lands* (1923) and *Lo!* (1931), as well as in correspondence with readers and in letters to newspapers, Fort outlined the evidence for otherworldly visitation.

Visitors from a multitude of worlds, Fort wrote, have come to earth over the centuries, possibly—certain enigmatic archaeological artifacts may hint—even longer. Conceivably alien intelligences helped direct the course of evolution. In ancient times such visitors may have been mistaken for gods, demons, or phantoms. These beings have different motives and missions. Some are more interested in the human race than others. Some are just passing through. Others have a longer-term concern with our planet and its inhabitants. Secret societies of esoteric nature may be in communication with extraterrestrials, while other alien civilizations may seek open contact with all humans. Alien ships have been seen on or under the ocean surface and sometimes mistaken for sea serpents. Aliens may be responsible for mysterious disappearances of people and ships. Some of the strange forms seen in the atmosphere are themselves living entities.

Fort's notions about otherworldly visitation are not presented in any clearly developed fashion but are scattered through the three volumes, mostly in asides. His habitual jokiness sometimes obscures his meaning. His occasional letters to newspapers, composed in more straightforward style, indicate, however, an authentic conviction that extraterrestrial craft, artifacts, beings, and creatures have been and are present on earth.

**The *Amazing* era.** In 1931 Tiffany Thayer formed the Fortean Society, the first organization to seek out and publish reports of strange flying objects along with other physical anomalies that may or may not be associated with extraterrestrial intelligences. One early member, journalist Vincent H. Gaddis, contributed a round-up of reports of unusual aerial phenomena to the June 1947 issue of the science-fiction pulp *Amazing Stories*. The issue was still on some newsstands when the **Arnold sighting** occurred on the twenty-fourth of that month.

*Amazing Stories* and its companion *Fantastic Adventures* were carrying articles like these because of editor Ray Palmer's strange obsession with what he called the “Shaver mystery.” Pennsylvania welder Richard Sharpe Shaver claimed to have vivid “racial memories” of life in Lemuria (the Atlantis of the Pacific), where an advanced race of giants called Atlans or Titans lived until deadly solar radiation

forced them to flee underground. The most favored members escaped to other planets. Others adjusted to the rays and evolved into the present human race. Of those who remained in the caverns, most degenerated into sadistic idiots, called deros, who torment surface-dwellers with death rays.

Palmer encouraged his readers and contributors to look for "evidence" of the continuing presence of deros, teros (the embattled minority of good Atlans), and the extraterrestrials with whom, according to Shaver, the subterraneans interacted. Palmer alleged that the deros and their associates possess "giant rockets that traverse in the upper air." He and occasional contributors such as Gaddis and L. Taylor Hansen wrote on Fortean phenomena and wondered, with Fort, if beings from other worlds were overflying the earth.

It must be stressed that Palmer did not depict the deros' "rockets" as disc-shaped. Nonetheless in later years some observers would insist, with more hyperbole than reason, that through Shaver's yarns Palmer "invented flying saucers." In fact, Palmer's influence on anything but his relatively minuscule audience of science-fiction fans and Forteans was nonexistent. When Kenneth Arnold saw nine fast-moving discs over Mount Rainier, Washington, on the afternoon of June 24, 1947, it did not occur to him that he might be observing something from outer space.

**The coming of the ethereans.** Between 7:25 and 9 p.m. on October 9, 1946, individuals in the San Diego area observed an object reminiscent of some reported during the airship era. Witnesses said it had a long, bullet- or airplanelike fuselage with large wings like a bat's. It was dark except for two red lights along its side. From time to time it flashed a searchlight, and its speed varied from very slow to very fast.

To at least two San Diego residents the significance of this apparition was immediately apparent. Just a few months before, in February, occult theorist N. Meade Layne had founded Borderland Sciences Research Associates (BSRA). Working with local medium Mark Probert, who channeled teachings from discarnates with advanced knowledge of spirit and cosmos, Layne and BSRA sought to explore the mysteries of the invisible world. They imagined a "spectrum of tangibility," populated by vast numbers and varieties of "etheric" entities who live on planets that are otherdimensional analogues to those in our own universe. (Being relatively intangible, ours is pretty low on the scale. The denser a realm, the more advanced—technologically and morally—it is.) The etherians interact with us on a regular basis. A member of the Fortean Society, Layne was well aware of reports of unidentified flying objects and their implications.

Among the many witnesses to the October 9 manifestation was Probert, who phoned Layne and was urged to try to communicate psychically with the craft's occupants. The effort succeeded, Probert told the press soon afterwards. As he put it:

The strange machine is called the Kareeta, or Corrida. . . . It is attracted at this time because the earth is emitting a column of light which



makes it easier of approach. The machine is powered by people possessing a very advanced knowledge of anti-gravity forces. It has 10,000 parts, a small but very powerful motor operating by electricity, and moving the wings, and an outer structure of light balsam wood, coated with an alloy. The people are nonaggressive and have been trying to contact the earth for many years. They have very light bodies. They fear to land, but would be willing to meet a committee of scientists at an isolated spot, or on a mountain top.

There is no denying that Probert was something of a pioneer: a flying-saucer **contactee** before either “flying saucers” or “contactees” were named. Contactees would rise to prominence in 1952 in southern California, with **George Van Tassel** and **George Adamski** leading the movement, but Probert was there first.

**The ETH in Arnold’s wake.** Between Fort’s and the first flying-saucer books in 1950, only R. DeWitt Miller’s little-read *Forgotten Mysteries*, published in the spring of 1947, placed speculation about interplanetary visitation between hard covers. Miller devoted a single chapter to “Enigmas out of Space,” where he noted “modern speculation” that “conscious beings from other worlds have actually reached this earth and navigated our skies in space ships.”

Press accounts indicate that alien spacecraft at first played no role in speculations about the identity of the mysterious objects. On June 28 Bequette summarized the assorted theories in a feature for the *East Oregonian*. The explanations ranged from “heated circular exhaust pipes of jet airplanes” to guided missiles to light reflected off aircraft wings to war nerves to mirages to “whisperings of Russian secret weapons.” As the days passed and the sightings continued, other solutions—“transmutation of atomic energy,” meteors, “red corpuscles of blood passing in front of the eyes,” hysteria—were bandied about, along with growing suspicions about American and Soviet secret weapons.

A United Press dispatch published on July 4 listed what it deemed the three leading explanations—meteorological phenomena, meteorites, aircraft from “some foreign power”—and mentioned, in passing, “a San Francisco layman’s flat assertion that the [discs] were ‘space ships’ from other planets.” The “flat assertion” was in a letter to the editor published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* on July 3, and the “layman” was occultist Ole J. Sneide, who claimed that the “flying disks are oblate spheroid space ships from the older planets and other solar systems. . . . Their present local headquarters is on the unseen side of our moon.” Sneide had learned as much, he said, while teleporting himself “hither and yon in and beyond our galaxy.”

On July 4, in a brief item, International News Service quoted an unnamed Detroit meteorologist’s suggestion that the discs might be “signals from Mars.”

July 7 and 8 were the breakout days for extraterrestrial hypothesizing in press accounts. On the first date two press-wire dispatches out of Chicago, in implicit challenges to popular wisdom about the discs, noted that strange aerial

objects were nothing new. Associated Press took note of “a rare book in Chicago’s Newberry Library”—Fort’s *Book of the Damned*—which revealed that “reports of flying discs had similar counterparts in the past.” United Press reporter Claire Cox quoted R. L. Farnsworth, president of the American Rocket Society and member of the Fortean Society, on sightings “in the last century. . . . I wouldn’t even be surprised if the flying saucers were remote-control electronic eyes from Mars.”

The following day DeWitt Miller, in a by-lined UP dispatch out of Los Angeles, wrote that the saucers had been seen since the early nineteenth century. If the discs were not Army secret weapons, Miller suggested, they could be vehicles from Mars or other planets or maybe even “things out of other dimensions of time and space.”

Press enthusiasm for flying saucers had begun to diminish by July 10, treating the reports more and more as if fit only for ridicule. Ole Sneide’s wild claim of communication with the “rulers of creation” and spaceships based behind the moon was widely circulated. So was a UP story quoting airline pilots’ skeptical comments, including those of T. P. Ball, Delta’s chief pilot, who attributed sightings to “imagination. . . . It certainly doesn’t seem to be the first wave of an invasion from Mars.” U.S. Sen. Glen Taylor, an Idaho Democrat, told the *San Francisco Chronicle*, “I almost wish the flying saucers would turn out to be space ships from another planet,” inasmuch as the mere idea of possible otherworldly hostility “would unify the people of the earth as nothing else could.”

This sort of discussion had almost no effect on public opinion. Nonetheless, in later years a persistent myth would find expression in debunking treatments of the UFO phenomenon: that nuclear-age anxieties caused the Americans of 1947 to imagine saviors from outer space. In reality, as Ted Bloecher found in a study of the 1947 wave, only two witnesses “openly expressed the opinion that the objects seen could have been ‘space ships.’” As the first Gallup poll on the subject, released on August 14 (“now that the uproar over the ‘flying saucers’ has subsided”), determined, outer-space explanations were so negligibly held that they were not even listed in the results.

Gallup’s next poll on the subject was taken in early 1950. This time space visitation squeaked in under the confusingly—even meaninglessly—titled category “comets, shooting stars, something from outer space.” Of course believing that conventional astronomical phenomena cause UFO sightings is hardly the same thing as believing that spacecraft from other planets are responsible. And it is certainly not immediately evident that, given the context, those polled interpreted “something from outer space” as representing the technology of civilizations from elsewhere.

Yet as early as October 1947 an Air Force intelligence directive noted that even within the military “it is the considered opinion of some elements that the object may in fact represent an interplanetary craft of some kind.”



**Project Sign**, the first known official UFO-investigative agency, commenced its work on January 22, 1948, under the Air Materiel Command (AMC) at Wright Field (now Wright-Patterson Air Force Base) in Ohio. At the outset project personnel had two operating assumptions. Some suspected that the discs were Soviet or American (perhaps Navy) secret weapons, while others were convinced that the phenomena would prove to be illusory. Meanwhile, though they got less newspaper publicity, sightings continued. In short order secret-weapon theories died for want of evidence, and investigators persuaded that the objects were real began to focus on the ETH. A spectacular sighting over Alabama in the early morning hours of July 24, involving an Eastern Airlines DC-3 and a huge rocket-shaped structure with two rows of portholes (see **Chiles-Whitted Sighting**), convinced the pro-ETH faction that its case was clinched. The Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg, disagreed and had the radicals transferred out of the project (see **Estimate of the Situation**).

In the 1940s and into the 1950s, knowledge of the surface conditions of the earth's neighboring planets was still so nebulous that some astronomers deemed intelligent life on Mars, and possibly even Venus, as at least marginally plausible. The prominent astronomer Fred Whipple, for example, wrote that an intelligent race of Martians, through technological and evolutionary adaptation, may have survived "the excessively slow loss of atmosphere, oxygen and water" and built structures to protect them from "nights . . . much colder than our arctic winters." In 1953, in his book *Flying Saucers*, Harvard astronomer and UFO debunker **Donald H. Menzel** left open the question of life on Venus, remarking that "had we ourselves developed on Venus instead of on the earth, it is not at all impossible that we might have developed into a race of mermaids and mermen." He thought it at least possible that Mars harbors "beings as intelligent as or more intelligent than we are."

**The ETH in 1950.** Widespread contrary opinion notwithstanding, flying saucers, flying discs, or—as the Air Force was already calling them—unidentified flying objects turned out to be no fleeting sensation. Sightings continued, in spite of official attempts to discourage them. Only a tiny minority of people, however, believed UFOs to be of unearthly origin. Nonetheless, popular perceptions were about to change.

In early May 1949 **Donald E. Keyhoe**, an aviation writer and retired Marine Corps major, accepted an assignment from *True* to look into the UFO mystery. On October 12 and November 27 *Variety* carried two sensational stories by columnist Frank Scully, who claimed that the U.S. government had recovered an extraterrestrial flying saucer and the charred bodies of its 16 diminutive but otherwise human-like occupants.

Keyhoe's findings appeared in the January 1950 issue of *True*, then a widely read men's magazine, and it quickly became one of the most discussed magazine articles in history. *True* had come to some dramatic conclusions: "For the past 175 years, the planet Earth has been under systematic close-range examination by living, intelligent observers from another planet." Over the past two years, having

observed atomic-bomb explosions, the space visitors had stepped up their efforts. The plan the aliens seemed to be following “varies in no important particular from well-developed American plans for the exploration of space expected to come to fruition within the next fifty years.”

According to Keyhoe, the “pattern of authentic saucer reports” shows the following:

1. First, world-wide sightings. Then concentration on the United States, the most advanced nation.
2. The numerous small disks seen in the first part of the scare, which some think were “observers,” remotely controlled.
3. The frequent sightings at Air Force bases.
4. Later sightings of larger disks, and space-ship types, after the first disks outspeeded and outmaneuvered our planes.
5. Low-altitude appearances . . . which could provide atmospheric samples.
6. The increase of mystery-light sightings, and night encounters, and decrease of reliably witnessed day sightings (when the scare had become nation-wide, and day operations might seem less wise).

Keyhoe assured his readers that no evidence of “belligerence” had come to light. He acknowledged a possible exception—the much-publicized 1948 crash of a Kentucky Air National Guard F-51 while in pursuit of an alleged flying saucer—but remarked that the craft’s occupants “could logically have feared they were in danger.” (See **Mantell Incident**. In the 1950s the object was identified as a Skyhook balloon, launched as part of a classified Navy project.)

*The Flying Saucers Are Real*, a paperback book expanding on the article, followed in short order. It offered a detailed account of the investigations and speculations that had culminated in the *True* piece. It also advanced an idea that would play nearly as large a role in the subsequent history of ufology as the ETH: that the Air Force knew UFOs to be of otherworldly origin but was concealing the fact to prevent public panic.

As for the UFOs’ planet or planets of origin, Keyhoe had no strong opinion. He mentioned neighboring ones such as Mars and Venus (especially the former) as well as hypothetical ones elsewhere in the galaxy. But to Keyhoe this was a secondary issue; what mattered to him was that wherever the spacecraft came from, they were here, and the human race had to prepare itself to face the consequences, even if, as he suspected, the UFOs were on “a peaceful mission.”

He had no idea what the beings looked like, and he assumed (wrongly) that no credible landing reports existed. A quick investigation of the crash/retrieval



story being peddled by Frank Scully convinced him it was a hoax. From then on Keyhoe generally kept his distance from “little men” reports of any sort.

That same year Scully’s *Behind the Flying Saucers* gave yet more currency to the growing belief in space visitors. Scully reported (on the authority of the pseudonymous scientist “Dr. Gee,” subsequently identified as professional swindler Leo GeBauer) that three downed spaceships had been secretly recovered in the Southwest in the late 1940s. Their occupants, short and human in appearance, clothed in the “style of 1890,” were presumed to be from Venus because they were too short to be Martians. This was not only untrue, of course, but laughably untrue.

Scully’s ETH, inspired by the tall tales GeBauer and his associate Silas Newton were feeding him, is simply expressed:

[T]he space pioneers are making a study of the magnetic lines of force that encompass this earth, checking discrepancies and disturbances, and making, in brief, a geodetic survey.

Assuming that these ships are traveling from the planet Venus, a maximum distance of approximately 161 million miles, the terrific distance may give us cause to pause, but it must not be forgotten that once outside of the atmospheric pressure conditions of a planet, ships move into space, where there is no weight, where there is no resistance, where there are only magnetic lines of force. And since circular motion is one of the most ideal of all aerodynamic methods of travel, which has been proven over and over again, we’re not surprised at the saucer-like shape of these ships of the air.

The third UFO book published that year (in December in Britain, the following April in the United States), Gerald Heard’s *The Riddle of the Flying Saucers*, echoed Keyhoe’s and Scully’s belief that the visitors had benign intentions; they acted, after all, much like “very circumspect, very intelligent gentlemen.” They could only be from Mars, where “life is certainly far ahead of us.” Like Keyhoe, Heard assumed implicitly that no spacecraft had landed and no occupants had ever been seen. Thus speculation about the aliens’ nature and appearance did not have to be tied to testimony from alleged observers.

Heard tied it to speculation—proffered in an off-the-cuff, probably tongue-in-cheek remark made to a *Los Angeles Times* reporter in March 1950—from astronomer Gerard P. Kuiper. Kuiper remarked that conditions on Mars being what they are (or, in any event, were thought to be in 1950), the only intelligent beings that could exist there would be advanced insects. Thus inspired, Heard wrote that the Martians who piloted the flying discs were super-bees

of perhaps two inches in length . . . as beautiful as the most beautiful of any flower, any beetle, moth or butterfly. A creature with eyes like brilliant cut-diamonds, with a head of sapphire, a thorax of emerald, an abdomen of ruby, wings like opal, legs like topaz—such a body would

be worthy of this "super-mind". . . . It is we who would feel shabby and ashamed, and may be with our clammy, putty-colored bodies, repulsive!

In Heard's view their coming had to do with their concern that our atomic bombs and warlike ways could endanger them.

**The new war of the worlds.** A small but vocal minority of early ufologists feared that extraterrestrials, or some of them, were up to no good. Englishman Harold T. Wilkins, author of the alarmingly titled *Flying Saucers on the Attack* (1954), even thought he knew *which* UFOs were unfriendly:

I have spoken of the apparent hostility of some types of flying saucers, particularly of the weird aeroform which has an insulated and non-rotary fusiform, or cigar-shaped center, around which revolves a singular ring, like the ring around the planet, Saturn. This ring is drawn out into an ellipsoid in order . . . to release satellite discs.

Wilkins linked flying saucers to natural disasters, fires, and disappearances of human beings. Unlike Keyhoe and Heard (who believed [Heard's emphasis] "the visitor *did everything . . . to avoid a contact, to keep clear of complications*"), he assumed that the aliens knew what they were doing when they blasted Kentucky Air National Guard F-51 pilot Thomas F. Mantell out of the sky. He compared the episode to scenes from H. G. Wells's classic interplanetary-invasion novel, *The War of the Worlds* (1898).

American ufologist Leonard H. Stringfield, who believed UFOs to be of Martian origin, collected evidence of UFO hostility and began publishing it in his widely read newsletter, *C.R.I.F.O. Orbit*. The July 1, 1955, issue reviewed several airplane crashes and disappearances that Stringfield thought might conceivably be related to UFO activity. He wrote two issues later:

Drawing from recent information and correlating it with the past, we concluded, (1) UFOs have turned from surveillance to aggressive action, (2) such action continues, *ipso facto*, a state of interplanetary war, (3) the war is entering a critical period or turning point and the world's military forces are uniting, defensively, (4) regional concentrations and landings of UFOs are in effect, (5) until the UFO's ultimate objective is determined, the fate of the world, as a result of landings, singly or en masse, is unknown.

Olavo T. Fontes, a Brazilian physician and UFO investigator, thought he had detected an ominous pattern in sightings: UFOs were conducting a military reconnaissance of the earth over the 11-year period between 1947 and 1958. In 1947 spacecraft surveyed the planet's geography, then from 1948 through 1950 concentrated on a general observation of defense installations. By 1952 they were zeroing in on specific targets, such as Washington, D.C.—thus the **Washington National radar/visual case** in July of that year. In time, presumably, they would invade the earth, using a weapon that would cripple any resistance:



The evidence at hand indicates that UFOs possess means of creating in the ignition systems of automobile and aircraft internal combustion engines secondary currents powerful enough to destroy the synchronization of spark-plug action and thus stall the engines; that they can interfere at will with radio transmitters and receivers, electric-current generators, batteries, telephone lines and, generally, with all electrical circuits; and that these "electric effects" are not merely side-effects of the powerful electromagnetic fields that exist around UFOs, but the result of purposeful interference of a weapon used as a means of defense or attack.

**Mars.** In 1877 Mars was at opposition to the earth. (At opposition Mars is aligned with the earth and thus opposite the sun. When this happens, Mars is at its closest to us, in other words from 35 to 63 million miles away. This alignment occurs approximately every 780 days, or 26 months.) At the Brera Observatory in Milan, the great Italian astronomer Giovanni Schiaparelli trained a refractor telescope with an eight-inch aperture—a small instrument on which to rest giant claims—on the red planet. Soon he announced that he had observed a complex system of *canali* on Mars' surface, and the following year he published a lengthy monograph on the subject.

*Canali* translates as "channels" or "canals." In either reading Schiaparelli was arguing implicitly for Martian life, though he only rarely and cautiously ventured into speculation along those lines; for the most part he insisted only that the *canali* were real physical features and not optical illusions. Canals, of course, inevitably necessitated an intelligent civilization with an advanced technology.

The claim sparked instant sensation and generated controversy. Observations made by Schiaparelli and others during subsequent oppositions did nothing to settle the debate, but they did pique the interest of a wealthy and prominent American, Percival Lowell. Leasing a 12-inch telescope from his alma mater Harvard University, he established Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Arizona, in 1894. By the next year he had already published a book and several papers and articles that proposed that the canals were part of a vast irrigation project engineered by a desperate race on a dying planet.

The controversy continued into the early decades of the new century. Skeptical astronomers held that Lowell's "canals" existed only in his imagination; moreover, as Simon Newcomb wrote in 1908, conditions on Mars rendered unlikely "any form of life unless of the very lowest order." Between September 20 and November 27, 1909, at the height of opposition, Italian astronomer E. M. Antoniadi studied Mars through a powerful telescope and detected not "a *single* genuine canal." Observations like these proved decisive, and in 1913 Antoniadi was able to write off "the canal fallacy."

Still, Lowell's ideas, however far-fetched, had a lasting effect on popular perceptions of possible Martian life. The association of flying saucers and Mars was so close that in its first four issues (in 1948 and 1949) *Fate* carried no fewer than three

articles on possible life there. Here as in subsequent writing in the early UFO literature, writers and ufologists would draw on the sort of modified Lowellism still championed by a few hopeful scientists to fashion a theory of interplanetary visitation.

In late March 1950, as Mars moved into opposition from earth (44 million miles at closest approach), the *Los Angeles Herald-Express* (March 21) noted that “scientists advised observers not to strain their eyes looking for ‘flying saucers’ zooming off the surface of the planet.” Already there was a level of suspicion that Martians might take advantage of the reduced distance during oppositions to launch ships earthward. Indeed, the eruption of waves in the opposition years 1950, 1952, and 1954 encouraged the belief that Mars was either the UFO intelligences’ home planet or a base used by beings from elsewhere, presumably another solar system.

The failure of the opposition in late 1956 to generate the anticipated mammoth wave served to dampen enthusiasm for Mars-based UFOs. In *Flying Saucers and the Straight-Line Mystery* (1958) the prominent French ufologist Aimé Michel withdrew his earlier support of “a coincidence of saucer ‘waves’ and oppositions of Mars” and now held that waves should be viewed as unpredictable.

The **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP), directed by Keyhoe, frequently reported on Mars-related developments, especially statements by the diminishing number of scientists who still held out hope for life there, intelligent or otherwise.

The “Mars cycle” was revived in a *Flying Saucer Review* (FSR) paper and, four years later, a book by Jacques and Janine Vallee. Using their own selected sample of sightings, they found an apparent correlation, from 1947 to 1962, between the opposition of Mars and waves of sightings. They cautioned, however, against drawing sweeping conclusions. “These samples are much too limited and too affected by selection effects, not to mention their strong geographical bias,” they wrote.

**The moon.** Probably for as long as telescopes have been focused on the moon, observers have reported what eventually would be called “transient lunar phenomena” (TLPs): light flashes, red patches, unusual shadows, and more. In 1972 astronomer and TLP authority Winifred S. Cameron had collected 900 reports from 1540 to 1970. Few astronomers have proposed, at least in public, that such occurrences—though undeniably enigmatic—amount to evidence of the activities of intelligent extraterrestrials.

That did not, of course, stop Charles Fort from indulging in wild—even comic—talk of lunarians trying to communicate with earthlings. *New Lands* in particular is replete with sober reports, taken from scientific journals, of a range of TLPs, coupled with Fort’s satirical “explanations,” such as one for changing geometric shapes observed in the crater Linné:

Astronomers have thought of trying to communicate with Mars or the moon by means of great geometric constructions placed conspicuously,



but there is nothing so attractive to attention as change, and a formation that would appear and disappear would enhance the geometric with the dynamic. That the units of the changing compositions that covered Linné were the lunarians themselves—that Linné was terraced—hosts of the inhabitants of the moon standing upon ridges of their Cheops of the Serene Sea, some of them dressed in white and standing in a border, and some of them dressed in black, centering upon the apex, or the dark material of the apex left clear for the contrast, all of them unified in a hope of conveying an impression of the geometric, as the product of design, and distinguishable from the topographic, to the shining god [earth] that makes the stars of their heaven marginal.

Before he became a contactee in November 1952, George Adamski was already known as a photographer of alleged UFOs, usually through a six-inch telescope. In a 1951 *Fate* article he noted that many of the objects “appeared headed for the moon.” Some landed on the visible side, while others apparently disappeared in the direction of the dark side. “I figure it is logical to believe that space ships might be using our moon for a base in their interplanetary travels,” he opined. Later Adamski would claim to have flown around the moon in a Venusian spacecraft.

Citing a number of TLP accounts from scientific journals, Harold T. Wilkins suggested that “the moon . . . long has been a stopover place for what we call flying saucers.” In his *Flying Saucer Conspiracy* Keyhoe expressed comparable sentiments.

M. K. Jessup, probably the most original extraterrestrial hypothesizer of the 1950s, was educated in astronomy and archaeology and had working experience in both. His *The Case for the UFO* (1955) linked ancient monuments with prehistoric superscience, but Jessup seemed less interested in alien visitors than in lost civilizations. In *UFO and the Bible* (1956) he wrote in passing of “a race of superbly intelligent men” who may have “built space-craft in the eons of man’s occupation of earth before the ‘flood.’”

In *The Expanding Case for the UFO* (1957), his last book, Jessup dealt at length with TLPs, using them to buttress a fantastic hypothesis that held that UFO intelligences live on the moon as well as in giant spacefaring structures that exist in the space between the earth and its satellite. Jessup asserted:

[W]e have reason to believe that space flight may have been in existence for 70,000 to 100,000 years, [and] there is reason to believe that space flight derives from a time in the pre-cataclysmic era which developed a first wave of civilization. . . . If we do, indeed, have “little people” within the UFO, as reported by observers of varying responsibility, then we may assume that the Pygmies, at some remote epoch, developed a civilization which discovered the principle of gravitation and put it to work.

Contactees told tales of meetings with space friends above, on, or below the lunar surface. None did it so colorfully as Ozark claimant Buck Nelson, who flew to the moon one day in April 1955, accompanied by Little Bucky of Venus, Little Bucky's dog, Big Bo, and Buck's dog, Teddy. Unfortunately, Nelson did not have a great deal to tell us about his adventures there, except to note the presence of a "building" as well as "children [who] played with several sized dogs. They rode Big Bo like a pony." The moon was only a stop-off on the gang's voyage to Venus. Another contactee, New Jersey's Howard Menger, produced photographs, allegedly taken from a spaceship, of what purported to be alien craft landing on the moon.

More cautiously, NICAP followed news of TLPs and scientific speculations about their cause and allowed itself to wonder if "domes" observed on the moon's surface might not be "possibly structures built by unknown space travelers."

Employing no caution whatever and borrowing liberally from contactee and occult lore, *FSR* contributor W. Raymond Drake speculated that lunarians destroyed the surface of their world in an ancient nuclear conflict, either with each other or with cosmic enemies. The survivors "descended to the deep caverns with air and water" and from there dispatch spacecraft to our planet. Drake offered a further remarkable suggestion: that "our belt of atmosphere hundreds of miles thick may have some of the properties of a giant lens, which magnifies the Moon to twenty times its real size."

Theories about lunar bases and moon-based UFOs appeared more rarely in the UFO literature of the 1960s. The most extreme speculations came from a Catholic priest, Guy J. Cyr, who held that the moon hosts not only an extraterrestrial population but an atmosphere, vegetation, and large bodies of water.

Possibly because of declining interest in the ETH (see below), ufologists had relatively little to say about moon bases in the 1970s, even as books making precisely such claims were seeing print. These included Don Wilson's *Our Mysterious Spaceship Moon* (1975), Jean Sendy's *The Moon: Outpost of the Gods* (1975), and George H. Leonard's *Somebody Else Is on the Moon* (1976). None of these authors had any significant link to ufology, and their books had little impact within the field. Leonard in particular used the new close-up pictures of the moon's surface to argue for the presence of alien artifacts in what others saw as the effects of light and shadow.

**The ETH and its critics.** By the mid-1960s a handful of ufologists were challenging the ETH's dominant role in UFO-theorizing. UFO phenomena, some argued, were just too strange to lend themselves to so materialist a notion as extraterrestrial visitation.

Soon John Keel and some writers associated with *FSR*, including editor Charles Bowen and associate Gordon Creighton, were holding forth for an occult-based reading of the UFO phenomenon. By the latter decade even Vallee, heretofore the ETH's most articulate scientific champion, had defected. His *Passport to*



*Magonia* (1969) explicitly linked UFOs to earlier supernatural traditions, and later books incorporated conspiracy theories into what critics were finding an increasingly incoherent portrayal of the phenomenon and its meaning.

Like his friend Vallee, **J. Allen Hynek** harbored private occult interests, and in time he began openly to apply such speculative approaches to the UFO question even as he rejected the ETH on scientific grounds. In a 1983 lecture he listed reasons (his emphasis) “why, *in terms of present day science*, a formidable case against E.T. as the core and culprit in the UFO phenomenon can be established, and established so well that a scientist who accepts only the popular definition of UFO can feel justified in rejecting UFOs out of hand.”

The reasons: (1) “Failure of Sophisticated Surveillance Systems to Detect Incoming or Outgoing UFOs.” (2) “Gravitational and Atmospheric Considerations.” Extraterrestrials could not function on our planet as the beings in CE3s are said to do. They could not walk about with ease or inhale our air or, even more to the point, levitate. (3) “Statistical Considerations.” Distant worlds would not—could not—dispatch as many spacecraft in the numbers UFO reports indicate. (4) “Elusive, Evasive and Absurd Behavior of UFOs and Their Occupants.” The beings and the craft that bear them do not act as we would were we to travel to a faraway planet. (5) “Isolation of the UFO Phenomenon in Space and Time: The Cheshire Cat Effect.” UFOs appear and disappear, staying visible for no more than brief periods of time; their being observed at Point A does not mean that they will be seen at Point B even if last spotted heading in that direction. (6) “The Space ‘Unworthiness’ of the UFO.” Most UFOs are too small to sustain a crew over the vast distances of the cosmos.

Hynek conceded that none of these objections need be fatal. In his judgment, however, the last of them—(7) “The Problem of Astronomical Distances”—was insurmountable. Extraterrestrials simply could not get here in “any reasonable time.”

Criticisms of the ETH also came from supporters of the neoskeptical **psychosocial hypothesis**, which sought to explain close encounters as culturally shaped hallucinations and visionary experiences. Generally speaking, psychosocial theorists, who came mostly from liberal-arts backgrounds, had little interest in science as such and thus seldom employed scientifically based arguments like Hynek’s. Nor did they much concern themselves with the hard evidence, such as that to be found in **close encounters of the second kind**, and they usually did not discriminate between outlandish claims and those others considered credible. Most seemed to believe the ETH to be inherently absurd and insisted that reported extraterrestrials were either too much or too little like us to merit credibility.

**The ETH and its advocates.** The ETH underwent a revival in the mid to late 1970s. One reason was that official documents recovered through the then-new Freedom of Information Act reminded ufologists of the **daylight discs**, radar/visual sightings, and other cases that attracted many of them to the ETH in the first place, before the more recent emphasis on highly strange (and, for the most part, mini-

mally evidential) phenomena had given rise to paranormal and psychosocial theories, or fusions thereof. Also spurring the renewed interest in the ETH was the opening of the long-closed question of crashes and retrievals of UFOs by Leonard Stringfield and, separately, by Stanton T. Friedman and William L. Moore, initial investigators of the 1947 New Mexico episode now known as the Roswell incident.

Yet another reason was the conviction of some that occult-flavored speculations were neither meaningful nor necessary, that the ETH was such a natural reading of the UFO phenomenon that attempts to replace it with dubious supernatural explanatory schemes were little more than excursions into futility and obscurantism.

The term "extraterrestrial hypothesis" and its shortened form "ETH" entered the vocabulary of ufologists through one of their fiercest critics, physicist/debunker Edward U. Condon, director of the Air Force-sponsored **University of Colorado UFO Project**. In the project's final report, *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects* (known informally as the Condon Report), Condon invented the phrase, defining it as the "idea that some UFOs *may* be spacecraft sent to Earth from another civilization, or on a planet associated with a more distant star."

As ufology, or at least some of it, grew more intellectually sophisticated, so did writing on the ETH. Noteworthy essays, drawing on state-of-the-art scientific knowledge and exobiological extrapolation and resisting extravagant speculation, appeared in the literature from time to time. Of the science-based examinations of the ETH, far and away the most important contributions are those by Michael D. Swords, professor of natural sciences at Western Michigan University. In a series of well-informed, cogently argued papers, Swords has held that the phenomena reported by UFO witnesses, including the oxygen-breathing humanoids of CE3s, are compatible with what could be expected of genuine spacefaring extraterrestrials and that consequently the ETH deserves to be regarded as a respectable scientific theory. Swords presents a summary of his views in **Extraterrestrial Hypothesis and Science**.

In the meantime hostility theories, which had all but disappeared from the ETH literature (though conspicuous in the neodemonological writings of Keel and *FSR* editor Gordon Creighton, who succeeded Bowen), reappeared in the 1980s in new and wilder form. George C. Andrews's *Extra-Terrestrials Among Us* (1986) imagined good aliens trying to contact humanity but being frustrated by bad aliens and evil CIA agents working in collusion.

The paranoid notions of later **Dark Side** chroniclers such as John Lear and Milton William Cooper, who borrowed conspiracy theories from the extreme right, spoke of an unholy alliance of evil aliens and a sinister secret government plotting the enslavement of the world's population. These claims cannot be called "theories" because Lear, Cooper, and others represented them as factual revelations. Much of the Dark Side lore can be traced to a mock documentary, *Alternative Three*,



broadcast on British television on June 20, 1977, and subsequently turned into a paperback book.

**The ETH in the abduction era.** Until the mid-1960s, when Barney and Betty Hill of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, underwent hypnosis hoping to recover missing memories associated with a September 1961 UFO encounter, ufologists knew nothing of an “**abduction phenomenon**.” Indeed, the Hills’s account of being taken against their will into a UFO by humanoids and forced to undergo physical examinations seemed unique and, to some ufologists, thoroughly unbelievable (see **Hill Abduction Case**). Over the next few years, however, comparable reports came to light, and abductions came to be seen as a particularly dramatic, albeit relatively rare, variety of CE3.

Abductions did not come to the forefront of UFO research until the publication, in 1981, of Budd Hopkins’s influential *Missing Time*. Hopkins had begun investigating abduction reports in the late 1970s. In the book Hopkins introduced several ideas that would ever after figure in discussions of the abduction phenomenon: (1) that abductions are not random events; (2) that they occur periodically over an abductee’s life, starting in early childhood; (3) that the abductors subject their victims to intrusive physical procedures (such as the insertion or removal of small devices thought to be monitoring or tracking mechanisms); (4) that the abductors, typically small gray-skinned humanoids, treat their captives with cold indifference on the whole; (5) that the purpose of abductions may have to do with alien interest in human genetics; and (6) abduction experiences may have happened to “tens of thousands of Americans whose encounters have never been revealed.”

A follow-up book, *Intruders* (1987), stressed the role of sex and reproduction in the abductors’ mission (see **Sex and UFOs**). Male abductees reported semen-removal procedures and even direct sexual intercourse with not-quite-human female entities. Women abductees told of mysteriously generated, and just as enigmatically terminated, pregnancies, followed by periodic episodes in which they would be taken aboard UFOs to interact with half-alien/half-human children—“hybrids.”

From his own hypnotic probings of abductees, Hopkins’s friend and colleague David M. Jacobs advanced the radical hypothesis that abductions are not just a part of the UFO phenomenon but its core. A great many close encounters are hidden abductions, in his view, and alien entities cover most of their abducting activity in a cloak of invisibility, thus the paucity of witnessed abductions. From the testimony of his subjects, Jacobs eventually became convinced that the alien mission consisted of a massive effort to create a race of hybrid beings, part human, part extraterrestrial, who one day will either coexist with or supplant the human race.

Fundamental to assumptions like these was the conviction that a significant number of people were unknowing abductees. In 1991 Hopkins and Jacobs secured funding for a survey, conducted by the Roper Organization and intended to determine how many Americans may be abductees. The two researchers devised five key

"indicator" questions, positive answers to which suggested, in their judgment, at least dim memories of abductions. Some 5,947 adult Americans were interviewed. The results, published the next year, indicated that—at least in Hopkins and Jacobs's reading—the "incidence of abduction experiences appears to be on the order of at least 2% of the population." In other words, 3,700,000 adult Americans may be abductees.

In a critique published in the *Journal of UFO Studies*, two sociologists and a psychologist, all with backgrounds in ufology, argued that serious methodological flaws in the design and logic of the survey effectively invalidate its conclusions. "For the present," they wrote, "we should recognize that we have no reliable and valid estimate of the prevalence of the UFO abduction phenomenon."

If there seems no shortage of abduction stories, the sort of hard evidence that would settle the issue remains elusive. There are, for one thing, no medically documented examples of anomalously terminated pregnancies among abductees, though anecdotal accounts of such among female close-encounterers go back at least to the 1960s, predating the abduction era. Ufologists themselves disagree on the meaning of the abduction phenomenon. Some dismiss it as psychological in origin, others argue for a **paranormal** cause, while others hold forth for a more positive view of the abducting aliens than Hopkins and Jacobs are willing to concede.

Until more is known with much greater certainty, efforts to incorporate abduction material into a revised ETH can only be exercises in speculation.

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## FAIRYLORE AND UFOS.

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→ See Anomalous Aerial Phenomena Before 1800; Paranormal and Occult Theories about UFOs; and Psychosocial Hypothesis.

### FALCON LAKE CE2

On May 19, 1967, Stefan Michalak, an occasional quartz prospector, left Winnipeg for Falcon Lake, a Manitoba resort town on the southern boundary of Whiteshell Provincial Park, a wilderness area the size of Rhode Island. He stayed that night in a motel on the Trans-Canada Highway and rose at an early hour to go into the bush. Around 9 a.m., having discovered a quartz vein near a marsh, he set to work. At 12:15 p.m., hearing the sounds of geese acting startled, he glanced upwards, where he spotted two red, glowing cigar-shaped objects.

Descending at a 45-degree angle, they began to look more like discs than cigars. The more distant one abruptly ceased its flight while the other landed on a large, flat rock some 160 feet away. The first UFO hovered for a short time, then headed west and was lost behind clouds.



The grounded UFO, more than 35 feet wide and 10 feet thick, with a three-foot-high cupola, looked like “hot stainless steel.” A gold hue surrounded the UFO, and purple-colored lights shone through openings in the structure. The openings consisted of 12-inch-long horizontal slits on the cupola as well as nine ventlike shapes on the lower part of the UFO. Even through the welding glasses Michalak was wearing, the glow was enough to generate red afterimages. The object emitted a whirring noise and a hissing sound. Warm air, along with a smell reminiscent of sulphur, wafted from it.

Over the next half hour, from his position near the rock from which he had been extracting quartz, the witness sketched the object, which he assumed to be an experimental American aircraft. Then a small door opened on its side—revealing a lighted interior but nothing else—and Michalak decided it was time to get a close-up view.

At about 60 feet distance from the structure, Michalak heard voices. Though they were “somewhat muffled by the sounds of the motor and the rush of air that was continuously coming out from somewhere inside,” he could tell that one was more highly pitched than the other. He shouted out a sarcastic remark: “Okay, Yankee boys, having trouble? Come on out, and we’ll see what we can do about it.” When the voices did not respond, the multilingual Michalak tried other languages: Russian, German, Italian, French, and Ukrainian. Still no answer. Now, standing in front of the craft, overwhelmed with curiosity, he tried something daring:

Placing green lenses over my goggles, I stuck my head inside the opening. The inside was a maze of lights. Direct beams running in horizontal and diagonal paths and a series of flashing lights, it seemed to me, were working in a random fashion, with no particular order or sequence. I took note of the thickness of the walls of the craft. They were about twenty inches thick at the cross-section.

Michalak moved his head back. Almost immediately three panels moved to close off the opening. He examined the highly polished exterior. When his glove accidentally touched the surface, it burned and melted.

The UFO angled slightly upwards so that the gridlike “exhaust” he had seen earlier on the craft’s bottom left now faced him. Nine inches high, six inches wide, the vent was made up of a uniform pattern of 3/16-inch round holes. From these holes a blast of hot gas erupted and seared his chest, sending him reeling. In agony Michalak ripped his burning shirt and undershirt off his back just as the UFO ascended in a rush of air. Once it had cleared the treetops, it headed off in the same direction as its companion had. It looked again like a cigar shape.

**Physiological effects.** Fearing that the flames from his incinerated shirts could start a conflagration in the dry woods, Michalak took care to stamp out the flames. Then he went to the spot on which the UFO had landed. It had a swept-clean appearance, surrounded by a 15-foot circle of pine needles, leaves, and soil. By now

a sensation of extreme nausea consumed him. An overpowering stench of burning electric circuits merged with the already present sulphur odor, to a decidedly unpleasant effect. A headache that had begun as a dull throb now was causing him dizziness. He began vomiting.

Michalak managed to start on a trek back to his motel. He stopped regularly to throw up and garner strength to move forward until the onset of the next nausea episode. It took close to two hours to get to the highway. Seeing that he was a mile from the spot where he had entered the woods, he made off in that direction. Soon a Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) car appeared on the road, heading toward him. He flagged it down and related his experience to the officer, who acted as if he thought Michalak were drunk. Declining Michalak's plea for help, he drove on. A few minutes later, with much difficulty, Michalak got to his motel.

At first he would not go inside. Fearing that he was "contaminated," he stayed outside in a small wooded area near the building. He walked over to park headquarters, but they had closed down. At 4 p.m., all but crippled with pain, Michalak entered the motel coffee shop and asked where he could find a doctor. The news was not encouraging. The nearest doctor was 45 miles to the east, in Kenora, Ontario. If he went there, Michalak would be even farther from Winnipeg. He might as well return home, he decided.

He called the *Winnipeg Tribune* and spoke with someone at its news desk. He proposed that if a reporter took him to a doctor, he could give a full account during the ride. At the same time, he added incongruously, he wanted "no publicity." The newspaper turned him down. Michalak then phoned his wife to say he had had an "accident"; would their son Mark pick him up at the bus stop in Winnipeg at 10:15?

Once in the city, Michalak had Mark drive him to Misericordia Hospital. There Michalak told the attending physician, a Chinese immigrant with an imperfect command of English, that exhaust from an airplane had caused the thermal burns on his upper chest and gridlike mark on his abdomen. He was too tired to try to relate what had really happened. The doctor gave him a sedative. Once back in his house, Michalak took a bath and fell asleep.

In the morning he was feeling no better. He could not hold food down, and his body gave off a terrible odor. That evening he saw his personal physician, R. D. Oatway, who gave him painkillers and referred him to a skin specialist for treatment of the burns. Oatway wrote some months later:

He complained of band-like headaches, hot forehead, anorexia and nausea, feeling of blacking out. On examination, he appeared rather depressed, dazed, apathetic, but rational and coherent. There was singeing of the hair on the forehead at the hairline and over the lower sternal and upper abdominal region. Over the upper abdomen, in the mid-portion and especially to the left of the midline, there were numer-



ous reddish, slightly irregular, oval-shaped, slightly raised lesions, arranged with their long axes mainly in a transverse direction. These lesions seemed to be consistent with a first degree burn. As I recall they were painful and tender but not severely. I also observed the burnt undershirt which had holes with charred (or blackened) edges corresponding to the site of the burn.

Michalak lost, according to his own testimony, as much as 22 pounds in the week following the encounter. He fainted on several occasions and experienced periodic vomiting episodes, but before long he began to feel better.

On May 23, at the urging of ufologist Barry Thompson, Michalak had radiologist T. D. Craddock examine him. Dr. Craddock found nothing out of the ordinary. Exactly a week later, at the Whiteshell Nuclear Research Establishment in Pinawa, Manitoba, he was again tested for radiation, again with routine results.

The chest burn healed, but the grid pattern remained. It faded for brief periods but always returned. In addition, a rash broke out suddenly on September 21 as Michalak was at his job at the Inland Cement Company. He experienced worsening pain and a burning in his throat. In his words:

My body began to swell. Tearing off my shirt, I noticed large red spots in the same place where the burns from the ship had been before. . . . In the next 15 minutes my body had turned violet. The swelling progressed so quickly that I could not take off my shirt again. . . . My hands looked as if they had been inflated with air. . . . My vision was failing. . . . The room was spinning around and I felt myself fading out into unconsciousness.

He ended up at Misericordia Hospital again. He was released at noon the next day. "Doctors at the hospital said the swelling was the result of some allergy," Michalak wrote, "but it seemed rather strange that the spots appeared in the same places where the UFO had left its marks."

When the symptoms continued well into 1968, Michalak grew frustrated with his own physicians' inability to diagnose the problem. So he made arrangements to visit the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, even though all expenses would be out of his own pocket; Canadian health insurance paid for nothing. In the summer Michalak stayed for two weeks, living in a nearby motel and undergoing treatment as an outpatient. While there he saw both physicians and psychiatrists. As it turned out, they provided no remedies either; they did little more than describe his symptoms and indicate causes. For example, they linked his fainting to sudden cerebral blood pressure losses. The diagnostic report reads in part:

Since May, 1967, he has had repeated clearing-up and recrudescence of the erythematous and pruritic lesions on his chest and legs. Sometimes these occurred at intervals of approximately 112 days, but this has not been consistent. Since January, 1968, reoccurrences have been more fre-

quent but the symptoms were briefer in duration. Generally, the chest lesions appear as minute points or "grains," enlarge progressively to the size of a quarter or a half dollar, and are very pruritic. . . . The time between initial appearance and disappearance has ranged from a few days to several weeks. Various medications have not been helpful. . . .

[His] main reason for coming to the Mayo Clinic now is because of headaches and "blackout spells" which have attended the other symptoms since he was severely ill in January, 1968. Headaches are mainly bitemporal, steady, and excruciating. Skin problems occur at the same time. Blackout spells are not sudden but cannot be predicted accurately enough to permit him to drive during symptomatic periods (he is fearful of hurting himself and/or others). Gradually, his eyesight begins to dim until everything goes black. He has time to sit down but is . . . unconscious for a few minutes or more. Allegedly, his wife has viewed him during these spells and he recounts no symptoms suggestive of seizures. He declares that he is unable to hear during the spells.

A Mayo psychiatrist found "no overt evidence of significant mental or emotional illness."

**The investigations.** On the evening of May 21—the day after the encounter—*Winnipeg Tribune* reporter Heather Chisvin called on Michalak at his home. Within a short time the story had become an international sensation. Soon investigators from a number of agencies, projects, and organizations were seeking information on the case.

Among them were ufologists Edward M. Barker, Brian C. Cannon, and Barry Thompson, associated with the Canadian Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (CAPRO). In 1967 Michalak wrote and paid for publication of a 40-page booklet, *My Encounter with the UFO*, which sold out without recouping printing costs.

Squadron Leader Paul Bissky, who investigated the case for the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), led the first search party to try to find the site, on May 25, but had no luck. He met with Michalak five days later and asked him to take him there. But Michalak begged off; he was too sick to go anywhere, he said. Instead he provided a sketch and a detailed description of the area. The next day, the thirty-first, police and military searchers, aided by an H112 helicopter, again explored the region and again failed. On June 2 Michalak consented to participate in a fly-over in a helicopter. Bissky reported:

Mr. Michalak . . . found no recognizable features. He stated he could probably do better on the ground. The search then proceeded with him leading the ground party, with the helicopter monitoring the proceedings from the air. With the aid of RCMP portable radios, an air/ground link was possible and this greatly assisted in directing the ground party to the most likely-looking areas as described by Mr. Michalak. Following



a frustrating afternoon and evening search . . . Mr. Michalak insisted the ground party had been very[,] very close to the sought-after location as he recognized several physical features and areas where he had chipped rocks during his last prospecting visit.

On the fourth Thompson, **University of Colorado UFO Project** representatives Roy Craig and Mary Lou Armstrong, and *Life* reporter John Fried accompanied Michalak to Falcon Lake, but Michalak professed not to be able to find the location. As other investigators would confirm when the site was found, the location sat amid heavy bush and undergrowth and was not easily accessible. Meantime, however, Bissky and the Colorado people suspected that Michalak was lying to them, presumably because he wanted to conceal a mining claim.

After another failed hunt later in the month, Bissky confronted Michalak:

Mr. Michalak objected very strongly on the basis that during his 25 June hunt he had in fact located what he had searched for originally and until such time as he could stake his claim, he had no intention of having anyone go near this area. . . . Mr. Michalak stated that no matter what anyone thought of him, he would not cooperate until his claim was filed.

On the thirtieth Michalak and his new partner, Gerald Hart, went to the site. According to the witness, the two noticed that the leaves on nearby trees had withered and died. There was also, Michalak wrote, the clear "outline of the ship on the ground," plus the "remains of my shirt . . . [and] the tape measure I lost that day." They placed these, along with rock and soil samples, into separate plastic bags and brought them back to Winnipeg—even though the RCMP had asked Michalak to leave the site intact should he find it.

In time Michalak was persuaded to cooperate with the authorities. On July 28 he, Bissky, and other official representatives collected samples at the site. They observed, in Bissky's words, "the outline of an approximate 15 foot diameter circle on the rock surface where the moss and earth covering has been cleared to the rock surface by a force such as made by air at very high velocity." But the investigators thought that an object of the size claimed by the witness should have affected the trees during its descent and ascent; "yet there was no indication [of any such effect] at all," Bissky asserted. Civilian investigators told a different story. According to Cannon, writing of the site as it looked in late May:

The lichen and moss which covered the other rocks in the group of three, was [sic] blown clear and was [sic] heaped in a ring around the edges of the rock over which the object was said to have hovered. A small tree which was growing through a crack in the rock, had been bent and broken and now lay on its side. The leaves of this tree [were] discolored in the following manner: on each leaf there was a round circle of brown within which was an area of red in the center of which there was a hole.

Even Bissky could not dispute the existence of the "very evident circle remaining at the site," as he put it in his official report. He also conceded the puzzling nature of Michalak's illness and burns. Beyond that, though, Bissky looked for discrepancies in the testimony. One concerned the problem of the direction of the UFO's departure. Michalak had said it left through an opening in the trees, which would have put it on a north-northeast path; yet the witness stated explicitly that it had gone off toward the west-southwest. Bissky was unwilling to credit Michalak with simple confusion.

Nonetheless, more serious questions were raised by Colorado project investigator Roy Craig. At the conclusion of the abortive June 4 search, Craig interviewed local individuals whose jobs or pastimes might have put them in a place where they could have witnessed the presence of an unidentified object. The project's report on the case notes:

According to Conservation Officer Jim Bell, the fire lookout towers were manned on this date after 9 a.m. A ranger with Officer Bell indicated that the forest was dry at this time. Both rangers felt that a fire capable of burning a man would have started the forest burning. They commented that watchmen in the towers generally notice smoke immediately from even a small campfire, and felt that a small fire in lichen and moss, such as Mr. A [Michalak] said he tramped out when he threw his burning shirts to the ground, would have been seen by the watchman. They also believed objects as described by Mr. A would have been seen by the tower watchman, had they been present for even a fraction of the time Mr. A claimed. Watchtowers are 8' x 8'. About six other towers are visible in the distance from the tower near the alleged landing site. Although a 35-40 ft. metallic saucer only 1/2-2 mi. away should have attracted the watchman's attention, nothing unusual was noted from the watchtower.

The second point seems more compelling than the first. The moss fire was small and apparently lasted no more than seconds. The fire-watchers' nonobservation is, however, difficult to square with Michalak's testimony. (Nonetheless there were, as we shall see later, some possibly corroborating sightings.) Craig found no verification for the proposition that Michalak was a habitual liar:

Mr. A was deemed very reliable by his employer. He had convinced representatives of the RCMP and RCAF, two of the several physicians involved, as well as his family, that he was telling the story of a real event. During the project investigator's interview, he seemed honest, sincere, and concerned. His presentation of his story was convincing. His wife and son verified his claim of an unusual odor coming from his body after his alleged UFO experience, indicating that the odor permeated the bathroom after Mr. A had bathed.



**A question of radiation.** The RCMP analyses indicated an alarming amount of radiation in the samples. The Radiation Protection Division of the Department of National Health and Welfare, which had studied one sample at the RCMP's behest, noted "a radiation value of .3 microcuries. . . . [T]he radiation is from a radium source and is a possible serious health hazard." The division also examined the soil, burned shirt, and steel tape Michalak and Hart had retrieved from the site on their June 30 visit. Initial gamma reading indicated a marked amount of "Ra 226 or its equivalent."

Stewart E. Hunt of the division's Safety Assessment and Control Section flew from Ottawa to Winnipeg to meet with officials to put together a plan of action. Their inquiries would focus both on the physical evidence and on the backgrounds of Michalak and his principal supporters among the ufologists, and they wanted particularly to look into the possibility that someone (presumably Michalak or his allies) had planted either radioactive hazardous waste or flecks of radium at the site.

The investigation laid both concerns to rest. No hazardous waste was missing, and Michalak's place of employment, which the team visited, did not use radium in any product.

Hunt was among those who participated in the July 2 expedition. According to his report:

One small area was found to be contaminated. This was located across the crown of the rock. There was a smear of contamination about 0.5 x 8.0 inches on one side of the crack. There was also some lichen and ground vegetation contaminated just beyond the smear. The whole contaminated area was no larger than 100 square inches. All water runoff areas were checked for possible contamination, but nothing was found.

The amount of radiation was slight—about one-third that associated with the typical wristwatch—but as a commentator in the office of the Chief of Defense Staff remarked in a 1967 memo, there was no apparent explanation of "how this 'smear' got on the rock at the alleged landing site. This is what is bothering the scientific people."

**Pieces of metal.** A representative of Manitoba's Department of Mines and Natural Resources, E. J. Epps, visited the site on several occasions between July 1967 and May 1968. His checks for radioactivity detected nothing out of the ordinary. Yet on May 19, when Michalak and a friend visited the spot, they found (in the words of Roy Craig)

massive pieces of radioactive material in a fissure of the rock within the "landing circle." This . . . consisted of two W-shaped bars of metal, each about 4.5 in. long, and several smaller pieces of irregular shape. These items were said to have been found about 2 in. below a layer of lichen in the rock fissure. . . . [T]he two fragments each consisted of a central massive metal portion which was not radioactive. One of these was 93% and the other 96% silver. Both contained copper and cadmi-

um, and had a composition similar to that found in commercially available sterling silver or sheet silver. The metal was coated with a tightly-adhering layer of quartz sand, similar to that used as a foundry sand. This also was not radioactive. The radioactivity was contained in a loosely-adhering layer of fine-grained minerals containing uranium. This layer could be removed steadily by washing and brushing. The minerals were uranophane and thorium-free pitchblende, characteristically found in vein deposits.

A Pittsburgh-based group, the UFO Research Institute, gave a specimen to physicist J. Roesner, who performed an analysis. He determined:

The gamma spectra were complex; 15 distinct energies ranging from 0.11 MeV to 2.57 MeV could be resolved. The three major contributors to the total gamma radioactivity had energies of 0.61 MeV, 1.10 MeV and 1.53 MeV and decayed with half lives of -14 days, 8 days and 21 days, respectively. . . . A semiquantitative chemical analysis . . . showed that 95 percent of the specimen is silver. The amount of copper in the specimen was determined to be 0.5 percent. . . . The energies and half-lives of the gamma rays emitted by the specimen do not agree with the expected decay of silver activation products formed in an (n\*γ) reaction on natural silver.

Some investigators suspected the materials had been planted at the site. As Craig remarked, "In view of the thoroughness of the earlier searches . . . it is improbable that the particles discovered a year later would have been missed." CAPRO, on the other hand, characterized as "overwhelming" the evidence that the metal had been there since at least July 1967:

When the metal was located, and since it was taken from the middle of the rock, we examined the soil samples removed from the sight [sic] in July 1967. These samples also contained tiny fragments of the same metal and no doubt the samples taken by the authorities contain pieces as well.

Moreover:

Analyses confirmed the presence of Radium 226, the same source as was found in the soil specimens. The luminous watch dial paint theory dulled considerably.

But later soil-sample analyses conducted at the University of Manitoba found only natural uranium activity and no indications of radium—replicating a 1968 analysis done at the Whiteshell Nuclear Research Establishment laboratory.

Chris Rutkowski, a leading authority on the case, observes:

The original soil samples retrieved from the site contained only natural radioactivity. However, radium 226 was detected by some investigators. It is not clear whether or not this was an error. The metal sam-



ples, on the other hand, are definitely mysterious and do not appear natural. To solve the puzzle, it would be most useful to obtain a small sample for reanalysis.

**Other sightings.** During the third week of May 1967, a number of residents of southern Manitoba reported sighting UFOs variously described as glowing, red, round, or cigar-shaped. Such descriptions are consistent with Michalak's. So, possibly, is a May 25 sighting over Winnipeg of "two very brilliant stars in close proximity to each other."

These reports were published in the local press at the time of their occurrence. Other reports came to light years later. In 1978 a man told Ufology Research of Manitoba that around "the same time as Michalak," he and a companion were walking along a highway between West Hawk Lake and Caddy Lake, immediately to the north of Falcon Lake, when the companion knelt to tie his shoe. As he was looking downward, the informant, who was staring straight ahead, was startled to see a large disc-shaped object come in from just over the trees. Making no sound, it crossed the road and disappeared over the trees on the other side. The incident happened so quickly that the other man never saw the object.

In 1992 a woman recalled a sighting she and her daughter had shared on the same weekend as the Michalak encounter. Driving west on the Trans-Canada Highway from Falcon Lake at 4 p.m., they spotted a "perfect flying saucer" just above the trees on the north side of the road. The UFO was hat-shaped and silvery, with windows on the upper surface. A "pinkish-mauve" light shone from within the object. It abruptly vanished as if "into thin air." Rutkowski remarks, "Independent sketches of the object by both witnesses agree in detail and seem to show a craft similar to that encountered by Michalak."

Rutkowski, who has known the Michalak family since his youth, calls them "sincere people . . . intelligent . . . levelheaded . . . well-read on many subjects." The ambiguities and incongruities notwithstanding, it is hard to believe that Michalak engineered a complicated, expensive **hoax** to no apparent purpose, endangering his health in the process.

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## FANTASY-PRONE PERSONALITY HYPOTHESIS.

→See Psychosocial Hypothesis.

## FOO FIGHTERS

During World War II sightings of unconventional aerial phenomena were reported in both the European and Pacific theaters of war. The phenomena (dubbed "foo fighters" after a maxim by cartoon character Smokey Stover, who was fond of saying, "Where there's foo there's fire") are usually thought of as amorphous nocturnal lights. But a study of the reports indicates that foo fighters represented a broad range of aerial anomalies. Two years after the war, in the wake of the Kenneth **Arnold sighting**, identical phenomena would be called "flying saucers" and, later, unidentified flying objects.



Perhaps the earliest known sighting is from September 1941. The witnesses, two sailors on board the S.S. *Pulaski*, a Polish vessel converted into a British troop ship, were in the Indian Ocean in the early morning hours of a clear, starry night. One of them, Mar Doroba, spotted a "strange globe glowing with greenish light, about half the size of the full moon as it appears to us." He alerted an English gunner, and the two watched the object as it followed them over the next hour.

On February 26, 1942, on the Timor Sea near New Guinea, a Dutch sailor was scanning the sky for enemy aircraft when, as he would tell Australian ufologist Peter Norris many years later, "I saw a large illuminated disc approaching at terrific speed 4000 or 5000 feet above us." He and others on the bridge observed the object for the next three or four hours. "It flew in big circles and at the same height," he recalled; then "the craft suddenly veered off in a tremendous burst of speed—at about 3000 to 3500 mph—and disappeared from sight." A month later, at midnight on March 25, as a Royal Air Force bomber passed over the Zuider Zee in Holland from a raid on Essen, Germany, the tail gunner saw a luminous orange disc or sphere following them. He notified the pilot, who also saw the object closing on them. When it got within 100 to 200 yards, the gunner fired several rounds at it, apparently hitting it but to no effect. After a short time the disc flew away at a speed the witnesses estimated to be 1000 mph.

Stephen J. Brickner, a sergeant with the First Marine Division, had an even more fantastic encounter:

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The sighting occurred on August 12, 1942, about 10 in the morning while I was in bivouac with my squad on the island of Tulagi in the southern Solomons, west of Guadalcanal. It was a bright tropical morning with high banks of white, fleecy clouds. I was cleaning my rifle on the edge of my foxhole, when suddenly the air raid warning was sounded. There had been no "Condition Red." I immediately slid into my foxhole, with my back to the ground and my face turned up to the sky. I heard the formation before I saw it. Even then, I was puzzled by the sound. It was a mighty roar that seemed to echo in the heavens. It didn't sound at all like the high-pitched "sewing-machine" drone of the Jap formations. A few seconds later I saw the formation of silvery objects directly overhead.

At the time I was in a highly emotional state; it was my fifth day in combat with the Marines. It was quite easy to mistake anything in the air for Jap planes, which is what I thought these objects were. They were flying very high above the clouds, too high for a bombing run on our little island. Someone shouted in a nearby foxhole that they were Jap planes searching for our fleet. I accepted this explanation, but with a few reservations. First, the formation was huge; I would say over 150 objects were in it. Instead of the usual "V" of 25 planes, this formation was in straight lines of 10 or 12 objects, one behind the other. The speed was a little faster than Jap planes, and they were soon out of sight. A few other things puzzled me: I couldn't seem to make out wings



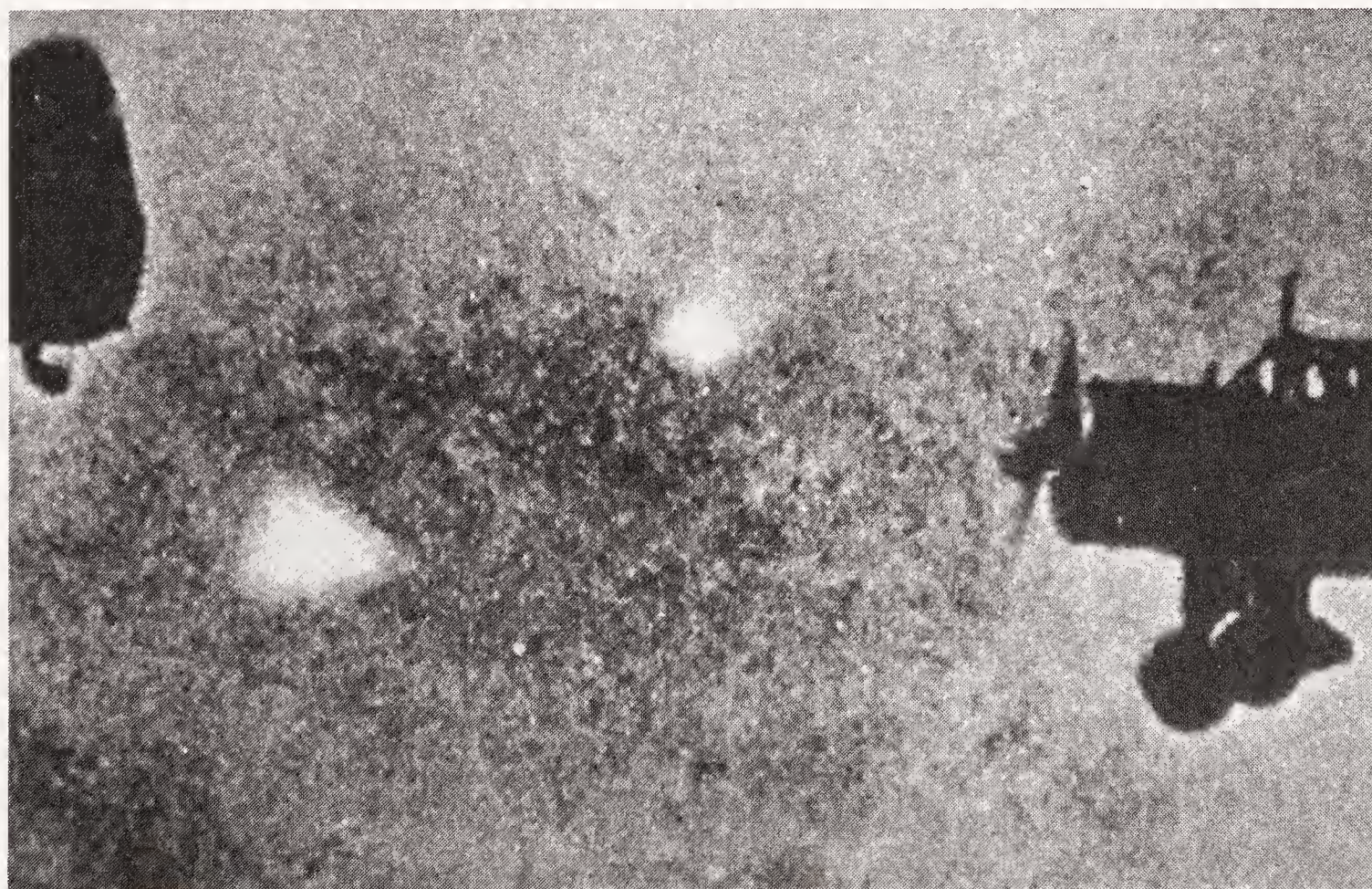
or tails. They seemed to wobble slightly, and every time they wobbled they would shimmer brightly from the sun. Their color was like highly polished silver. No bombs were dropped, of course. All in all, it was the most awe-inspiring and yet frightening spectacle I have seen in my life.

One 1943 English report would not have been out of place during the spate of **airship sightings** of earlier decades. In a 1978 Radio Humberside interview Barbara Whiteley recalled an incident that occurred when she was stationed at Royal Air Force Compton Bassett, Wiltshire. During the night she spotted

up in the sky not very high—I would think as high as a church tower maybe—over the camp was this long . . . cigar-shaped thing. I just couldn't believe my eyes. There were five or six lights, like searchlights, but the lights were coming from the thing onto the ground. . . . The thing was like a barrage-balloon but more narrow at the ends . . . and quite long. . . . I couldn't say anything to anybody that night, and then the next morning I thought, well, I must be imagining things because we didn't hear about UFOs in those days.

From 1944 through the end of the war the next year, there was no shortage of sightings of all manner of unusual flying objects. Some examples:

**European theater.** Near Antwerp, Belgium, September 1944: Around 9 p.m. a Canadian soldier observed "a glowing globe traveling from the direction of the front line towards Antwerp. It seemed to be about a meter in diameter and looked as though it was of cloudy glass with a light inside. It gave off a soft white glow. Its altitude seemed to be about 13 m, speed about 50 km/h, and there was no sound



Numerous World War II pilots in both the European and Far East theaters reported encountering mysterious luminous objects—"foo fighters"—while in flight. (Fortean Picture Library)



of any sort. It . . . was obviously powered and controlled. It was followed by another which in turn was followed by others, five in all." Rhine Valley, Germany, December 1944: Pilot Lt. Donald Meiers reported, "A 'foo fighter' picked me up recently at 700 feet and chased me 20 miles down the Rhine Valley. I turned to starboard, and two balls of fire turned with me. I turned to the port side, and they turned with me. We were going 260 miles an hour, and the balls were keeping right up with us" (*New York Times*, January 2, 1945). Dresden, Germany, late March 1945: At least two residents of the city saw a round object hovering silently in the air. One recalled, "It had neither propeller nor wings. . . . Then it suddenly disappeared, like a burst soap bubble. . . . [T]he unfamiliar object was silver-colored but flat—not round like a balloon" (*Weltraumbote*, July/August 1958).

**Asian theater.** Between Palembang, Sumatra, and Ceylon, August 10, 1944: The crew of a B-29 returning from a bombing run saw a "strange object pacing us about 500 yards off the starboard wing. At that distance it appeared as a spherical object, probably five or six feet in diameter, of a very bright and intense red or orange in color," the pilot related. "It seemed to throb or vibrate constantly. . . . I went into evasive action, changing direction constantly as much as 90 degrees and altitude about 2000 feet. It followed our every maneuver for about eight minutes, always holding a position of about 500 yards out and about two o'clock in relation to the plane. When it left, it made an abrupt 90-degree turn up, and accelerating rapidly, it disappeared in the overcast." Near Okinawa, April or May 1945: In daylight, during the Okinawa campaign, "bright gold balls" moving in a straight line shot over the island, and a number of battleship and destroyer radars tracked them moving at over 600 mph. East of Okinawa, May or June 1945: The crew of a U.S. Marine transport observed, at about a quarter-mile from them and in a clear, cloudless sky, a long cigar-shaped object with three much smaller metallic discs behind it. The discs disappeared behind (or perhaps inside) the cigar, which shot off at high speed.

Among the Allies it was variously believed that the foos were new German or Japanese weapons, flares, balloons, flak, or even St. Elmo's fire, though as an early writer on the phenomenon noted, "no explanation stood up."

Little is known about official investigation of the phenomenon, but apparently some effort was made to understand it. A cryptic reference in the minutes of the CIA-sponsored **Robertson panel** meeting, convened in January 1953 to review Air Force UFO data, reads:

Instances of "Foo Fighters" were cited. These were unexplained phenomena sighted by aircraft pilots during World War II in both European and Far East theaters of operation wherein "balls of light" would fly near or with the aircraft and maneuver rapidly. They were believed to be electrostatic (similar to St. Elmo's fire) or electromagnetic phenomena or possibly light reflections from ice crystals in the air, but their exact cause or nature was never defined. Both [physicist H. P.] Robertson and [physicist and fellow panel member Luis] Alvarez had

been concerned in the investigation of these phenomena, but David T. Griggs (Professor of Geophysics at the University of California at Los Angeles) is believed to have been the most knowledgeable person on this subject. If the term “flying saucers” had been popular in 1943-1945, these objects would have been so labeled.

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## FRIEDMAN, STANTON TERRY.

→See Crashes and Retrievals of UFOs.

## FORT, CHARLES HOY (1874-1932)

Charles Hoy Fort was born on August 9, 1874, in Albany, New York. In a very real sense Fort was the first ufologist—the first person to collect and publish reports of anomalous aerial phenomena as well as other reports of unexplained physical phenomena. His three books, which appeared between 1919 and 1931, constitute an invaluable historical record of early reports of UFO-like objects.

Fort and his two younger brothers grew up in a household dominated by a tyrannical, violent father. The bright and inquisitive Charles retreated into a world

**FORT,**  
**CHARLES**  
**(1874-1932)**



of books. By high school he was getting material published in national magazines. At 17 Fort went to work for the *Albany Democrat*. The next year, after a series of confrontations with his father and stepmother, Fort was sent to live with his maternal grandfather but soon afterwards moved to New York City, where he got a job with the *Brooklyn World*. Some months later he edited a short-lived suburban weekly and after that embarked on a 30,000-mile trip around the world, determined to be a writer and to collect experiences to write about.

While traveling through South Africa, he contracted a fever that kept him ill even after his return to America. Anna Filing, a young English woman whom he had known in Albany but who now lived in New York, nursed him back to health, and the two were married on October 26, 1896. The couple embarked on a life lived, in the words of Fort's biographer, "on the edge of poverty" in a variety of tenement buildings. In 1905 he came to novelist Theodore Dreiser, who would become one of his two closest friends, with what Dreiser would call "the best humorous short stories I have ever seen produced in America."

Fort began writing novels, but only one was ever published, *The Outcast Manufacturers* (1909). It was not a commercial success.

Despite periods of financial and emotional desperation Fort continued his wide-ranging reading and research into scientific, natural, and behavioral questions, filling a wall of pigeonholes with some 40,000 notes, all of which he burned after deciding that they amounted to little more than a fire hazard.

In the first half of the 1910s he wrote the first of his books on the sorts of anomalies that in time would be called "Fortean phenomena." The book, titled *X*, never saw print, though Dreiser tried to interest publishers in it. All that survives of it and a follow-up work, *Y*, is Fort's description of it in letters to Dreiser. Damon Knight writes: "X was organized around the notion that our civilization is invisibly controlled by beings on the planet Mars. . . . In *Y*, Fort imagined another sinister civilization, a little closer at hand—at the South Pole."

In 1916 the death of his uncle brought Charles a share of his grandfather's estate, giving the young writer a degree of financial independence. The next year, when Fort's brother Clarence died at the age of 38, his share of the estate was divided between Charles and the other brother, Raymond. Fort was now free to pursue his eccentric and time-consuming interests.

**The books.** The result was a memorable work, *The Book of the Damned* (1919), with its famous opening words: "A procession of the damned. By the damned, I mean the excluded. We shall have a procession of data that Science has excluded." The "damned" included falls of organic and inorganic matter from the sky, black and red rains, archaeological oddities, astronomical enigmas, freak weather, and unidentified flying objects. One example of the sorts of proto-UFO reports that caught Fort's attention can be found in Chapter 21:

*L'Astronomie* [1894]: That, upon the morning of Dec. 20, 1893, an appearance in the sky was seen by many persons in Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. A luminous body passed overhead, from west to east, until at about 15 degrees in the eastern horizon, it appeared to stand still for fifteen or twenty minutes. According to some descriptions it was the size of a table. To some observers it looked like an enormous wheel. The light was a brilliant white. Acceptably it was not an optical illusion—the noise of its passage through the air was heard. Having been stationary, or having seemed to stand still fifteen or twenty minutes, it disappeared, or exploded. Not a sound of explosion was heard.

Chapters 20 through 26 are taken up almost exclusively with reports of unusual lights and craftlike objects in the atmosphere. Fort explicitly links these with extraterrestrial visitors. *Damned*, like the books that came after it, is filled with outrageous notions and “theories” that Fort put forth usually to satirize scientists’ attempts to explain extraordinary phenomena with theories that, while purporting to be conventional, were themselves bizarre. Among the book’s wilder “theories” is the suggestion that the earth is someone else’s “property. . . . That something owns this earth—all others warned off.” He also contends that giant, populated land masses (with vast oceans from which fish and frogs occasionally fall) hover in the sky above the earth.

This latter “hypothesis” figures centrally in the early chapters of Fort’s next book, *New Lands* (1923). So, however, do many reports, culled from scientific journals and newspapers, of mysterious objects in earth and space. If “theories” about continents in the atmosphere were little more than Fort’s way of poking fun at both scientists and cranks, it is clear that Fort did take seriously the idea of interplanetary visitation. Between 1924 and 1926, when he was living in London (where he and Anna had gone in 1920 so that Fort could continue his researches in the British Museum), he had four letters published in the *New York Times*, all dealing with possible evidence of otherworldly intruders.

In 1929, his health declining and his eyesight failing, Fort moved back to New York. By now Fort had many admirers, especially among journalists, novelists, activists, and intellectuals (Dreiser, Ben Hecht [who coined the term “Fortean”], John Cowper Powys, Sherwood Anderson, Booth Tarkington [who wrote the introduction to *New Lands*], Lincoln Steffens, Alexander Woollcott, Clarence Darrow, Havelock Ellis, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and others), and by the mid-1920s there was talk of putting together a formal organization to collect and analyze Fortean data. Fort himself, who did nothing to encourage any of this, found the very idea hilarious. Yet he faithfully corresponded with his readers, some of whom had taken to investigating reports of anomalous phenomena and sending their findings on to Fort.

Fort’s third book on anomalies (and the last to deal with UFOs) went unpublished until January 1931. The working title was *Skyward Ho!* Fort’s close



friend Tiffany Thayer suggested *Lo!*, "because in the text the astronomers are forever calculating and then pointing to the sky where they figure a new star or something should be and saying 'Lo!'—and there's nothing whatever to be seen where they point."

In *Lo!*, besides covering the usual range of unexplained physical anomalies, Fort also considered reports of monstrous creatures and mystery animals, anticipating the concerns of the proto-scientific discipline that in time would become known as cryptozoology. He would also anticipate some later ufologists' desire to link such creatures with UFOs and alien visitors. Referring to 1890 reports of a "monster" said to be terrorizing the people of Euroa, Australia, Fort declared, characteristically ridiculing himself even as he did so, "I am tired of the sensible explanations that are holding back new delusions. So I suggest that this thing, thirty feet long, was not a creature, but was a construction, in which explorers from somewhere else were traveling back and forth, near one of this earth's cities, having their own reasons for not wanting to investigate too closely."

*Lo!* is also notable for being, so far as is known, the first book ever to mention the sort of report that in the UFO age would be called a "**close encounter of the third kind**," an expression coined by astronomer/ufologist **J. Allen Hynek** in his *The UFO Experience* (1972). In Chapter 11, while discussing a wave of **airship sightings** in Britain in 1909, Fort mentions a story told by a Cardiff man and reported in London's *Daily Mail* on May 20. According to Fort's account, the man claimed a late-evening encounter with a "large tube-shaped construction" in the Caerphilly Mountains on the eighteenth. "In it," he writes, "were two men, in heavy fur-overcoats. When they saw [the witness], they spoke excitedly to each other, in a foreign language, and sailed away. Newspaper men visited the place, and found the grass trampled, and found a scattering of torn newspapers and other debris." Fort adds that "anybody else [who] wants to think that these foreigners were explorers from Mars or the moon" is welcome to do so, but he himself suspects a **hoax**. An examination of 1909 press accounts suggests Fort may have been right.



Charles Fort pioneered ufology in the early twentieth century; he authored the first UFO book, "The Book of the Damned" (1919). (Fortean Picture Library)



On January 26, 1931, at a dinner at the Savoy-Plaza in New York City, Tiffany Thayer announced the formation of the Fortean Society. Fort was present only because he had been lured to the hotel by a series of misleading telegrams. The society would survive until 1959, the year of Thayer's death.

By 1932 Fort's health had deteriorated to the extent that even the simplest activities were an ordeal. Having no trust in medical science, he refused to summon a physician and devoted himself to feverish work on what would be his last book, *Wild Talents*, which dealt with extraordinary phenomena associated with human beings. On the morning of May 3 Anna summoned an ambulance that rushed him to Royal Hospital in the Bronx. His publisher Aaron Sussman showed up not long afterwards with advance copies of *Talents*, but Fort was too weak to lift them. He did not survive the day.

He was buried in the family plot in Albany. His 60,000 notes were given to the New York Public Library.

In September 1937 the first issue of *The Fortean Society Magazine* (later retitled *Doubt*) appeared. In 1941 the society and Henry Holt and Company published the one-volume *The Books of Charles Fort*, with an introduction by Thayer. When "flying saucers" became front-page news beginning in the early summer of 1947, *Doubt* dutifully chronicled reports despite Thayer's suspicion that the saucers were a military invention designed to keep people's minds off their real problems. For its part, in 1949 Ohio State University astronomer J. Allen Hynek, then a scientific consultant to the U.S. Air Force's **Project Grudge**, referred sourly to the "highly dubious works of Charles Fort"; these works "are entirely reprehensible in viewpoint," he wrote, before grudgingly conceding that nonetheless they "do contain accounts of unusual aerial sightings over a period of many years."

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## FORT MONMOUTH RADAR/VISUAL CASE

On September 10, 1951, at 11:10 a.m., at the Army Signal Corps radar center in Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, a student operator picked up a target that was moving too fast to be tracked automatically. The object, located 12,000 yards southeast of the installation, seemed to be following the coast line. The operator tracked it off and on for the next three minutes, after which it disappeared in the northeast. He estimated its speed at 700 mph.

Twenty-five minutes later a T-33 jet trainer piloted by Lt. Wilbert S. Rogers, with Maj. Edward Ballard aboard as a passenger, came upon a "silver-colored object about the size of a fighter plane." "Perfectly round and flat," it was flying, by the observers' estimate, at 900 mph. Rogers gave Air Force investigators this account:

When first sighted, I would judge that it was between 5 and 8,000 feet over Sandy Hook [New Jersey]. . . . It appeared to be descending when I first saw it at Sandy Hook and appeared to level out in flight just north of Red Bank, New Jersey, and continued on at the same altitude until it disappeared. At the point of our first sighting of the object, I started a descending 360-degree turn to the left from 20,000 feet to 17,000 feet, gaining air speed from 450 mph to 550 mph on a course paralleling that of the object until it was lost from sight.

In our training and daily practice as intercept pilots, we must note accurately the times at which the object of the interception is first sighted. I did this automatically when I first sighted the object over Sandy Hook and noted the time to be approximately 1135 EDT, 10 September 1951. Although we were on a direct course for the destination at Mitchell AFB [Long Island] at 20,000 feet at the time of the sighting, I was so amazed at the speed of the object that I immediately started the turn to the left and waited for Maj. Ballard to get through with the radio conversation he was having . . . so I could point the object to his attention, and we both watched it make a 90-degree turn to the left and kept it under observation together while it covered

approximately 20 miles and disappeared out to sea. The object appeared to be banking as its course described a radial [sic] 90-degree turn to the left.

The next day, at 10:50 a.m., two radars picked up an object moving too rapidly for automatic tracking. It provided an unusually strong return and was moving at close to 1000 mph.

Then at 1:30 that afternoon another target, 10,000 yards away and at 6000 feet to the north, appeared on radar at Fort Monmouth. The operators stepped outside hoping to glimpse the object, apparently hovering, but overcast conditions prevented any such observation. Back inside, they tracked the object as it ascended vertically at a rapid rate of speed, then streaked to the south so fast that it was lost to automatic tracking. Through manual tracking the operators monitored it for a short time. They concluded it was traveling well over 700 mph. They rejected a **Project Grudge** suggestion that the tracking was caused by “anomalous propagation” linked to weather conditions; they insisted they were familiar with this phenomenon and would have recognized it if they had seen it.

**The official response.** At the time of the Fort Monmouth events, Grudge, the Air Force’s official UFO project (located at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Dayton, Ohio), was nearly moribund, having been all but killed off by the vehement anti-UFO sentiments prevailing at the Air Technical Intelligence Center (ATIC), which oversaw Grudge, and encouraged by ATIC’s chief Gen. Harold Watson. All the while Watson and Grudge head James Rodgers were assuring Maj. Gen. Charles Cabell, head of Air Force Intelligence at the Pentagon, that real—if quiet—investigation was continuing. In practice, however, any report that came Grudge’s way was promptly ridiculed and disposed of—without further inquiry—in order to satisfy the Pentagon that all was in hand.

But when *Life* reporter Bob Ginna showed up at Wright-Patterson in April 1951 and observed the project’s manifest shortcomings, Watson was forced—if only for appearance’s sake—to reassign fellow UFOphobe Rodgers elsewhere in Air Materiel Command (AMC) intelligence at the base. Watson put Lt. Jerry Cummings in his place. Lt. Col. N. R. Rosengarten was brought in to replace the chief of ATIC’s Aircraft and Missiles Branch, Rodgers’s superior.

Yet Rodgers and another Watson ally, radar expert Capt. Roy James, continued their efforts, apparently with Watson’s blessing, to discourage serious study. When a detailed account of the Fort Monmouth episode came to Watson’s head of intelligence analysis, Col. Bruno Feiling, Feiling sent the report to James, not to Rosengarten and Cummings, and soon Rodgers had a look at it.

Soon afterwards Lt. Col. Rosengarten heard that a significant UFO case had not come to his attention, even though he was the one responsible for handling such reports. He complained to Feiling, who gave him a copy. After Rosengarten showed him the copy, Cummings went to confront James and Rodgers. It turned out



that they had already devised an off-the-cuff “solution” for the Pentagon (“the whole outfit were a bunch of young impressionable kids and the T-33 crew had seen a reflection,” Capt. **Edward J. Ruppelt**, an onlooker at ATIC, recalled in a private memo), and Gen. Watson had signed off on it.

An argument ensued in Feiling’s office. It ended when a call was placed to Cabell. Cabell’s assistant, who took the call (his superior was out of town), expressed incredulity that an investigative team was not already on its way to Monmouth.

Hours later Cummings and Rosengarten flew to New Jersey. The two officers spent all of the thirteenth interviewing everyone involved in the incident, including the pilot and passenger of the T-33. They were convinced that the object they had seen was “intelligently controlled.” The two ATIC representatives then flew on to Washington to brief Maj. Gen. Cabell personally.

Once there, they were taken into a meeting already in progress, where the two were introduced to high-ranking military officers as well as two representatives of Republic Aircraft, including Robert Johnson, there to speak for a group of scientists and industrialists who felt the Air Force’s handling of UFO matters left much to be desired. Cabell asked Cummings to summarize what had been going on within the project. According to a privately recorded account by Ruppelt:

Jerry told me that he looked at Rosy [Rosengarten] and got the OK sign, so he cut loose. He told how every report was taken as a huge joke; that at the personal direction of Watson, Rogers [sic], Watson’s #1 stooge, was doing everything to degrade the quality of the reports; and how the only analysis consisted of [Rodgers’s] trying to think up new and original explanations that hadn’t been sent to Washington before. [Rodgers] couldn’t even find half of the reports.

A furious Cabell wanted to know, “Who in hell has been giving me these reports that every decent flying saucer sighting is being investigated?” At one point he shouted, “I’ve been lied to! I’ve been lied to!” The other high-ranking officers expressed comparably unhappy sentiments. “I want an open mind,” Cabell went on. “In fact I order an open mind. Anyone that doesn’t have an open mind can get out, now.”

Cummings and Rosengarten returned to Wright-Patterson with orders to reorganize the UFO project, which upon Cummings’s retirement soon afterwards passed to Ruppelt. Ruppelt—whose job was to analyze Soviet air power intelligence—had been monitoring developments in the UFO project from his desk in the same office Rodgers had occupied. What he had seen had not impressed him favorably. He would remember the period as a “dark age.”

In Grudge’s Special Report No. 1 (December 28, 1951) the T-33 sighting is explained as “probably” caused by a “balloon launched by the Evans Signal Laboratory.” (Ruppelt remembered that “the two officers said that we were nuts. They

found several holes in our analysis.") The first radar tracking was "possibly due to the operator[s] being excited." A weather balloon was responsible, according to Grudge, for the first tracking on the eleventh. Here Grudge based its identification on nothing more than a call from Air Force Intelligence. "How [the identification] was determined is unknown," Grudge acknowledged with disarming candor. The last radar tracking "remains unknown," but Grudge speculated that "it was very possible that it was due to anomalous propagation and/or the student operators' thoughts that there was a great deal of activity of unusual objects in the area."

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## GHOST ROCKETS

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**A**t 11 p.m. on January 18, 1946, as an American C-54 transport plane was passing over rural France at 7000 feet, the pilot observed what he took to be a brilliant meteor at 35 degrees above the eastern horizon. The object fell and was lost to view—but only momentarily. To the witness' astonishment the "meteor" ascended, then "described a tiny hyperbola of perhaps one degree altitude and fell again from sight."

Whatever the phenomenon was, it clearly had not been a meteor. Soon Europeans and others would call such phenomena "ghost rockets" and ascribe them to secret Soviet experiments with captured German V-2 missiles. Many of the "rockets" *would* be meteors, but none, so history attests, were missiles from Russia, which then possessed only a primitive missile technology. A summary of some of the more interesting sightings of that year follows:

**Aerial sightings.** Sala, Sweden, and Helsinki, Finland, June 9: At the former location a huge light with a long, fiery tail plunged earthward, and shortly afterwards an explosion sounded. At 10:17 p.m. a rocket-shaped light passed over Helsinki at 1000 feet; smoke trailed behind it, and a rumbling sound accompanied it. Its afterglow lighted the sky for 10 minutes. Ortviken and Sundsvallsbo, Sweden, July 18: Observers at the first location and, soon afterwards, the second saw a silvery cylinder *without* a smoke trail passing at a moderate speed and at less than 1000 feet



altitude. It was traveling first toward the west but then altered its course toward the northwest. Stockholm, early August: A meteorologist studying clouds through a telescope noticed a luminous object on the horizon. Within 10 seconds it had come into view. It was, he said, "at least 90 feet long. The body was torpedo-shaped and shining like metal." It had a "tapered tail that spewed glowing blue and green smoke and a series of fire balls" (*New York Times*, August 11, and *Christian Science Monitor*, August 14). Central and southern Sweden, August 11: Between 9 and 10 p.m. hundreds of persons saw "ghost bombs" that flew from south to north, giving off a brilliant blue-white light. Sometimes two of the objects were seen flying together, and some witnesses reported that smaller silver "balls" came out of the larger objects, which were variously described as "cylinders" and torpedoes "with a wide nose" and "fire-spurting tail" (*Svenska Dagbladet*, August 12). Sweden, August 24: A Norwegian student and a Swedish friend were boating on a river (because of press censorship of ghost-rocket sightings, the exact location was undisclosed) when a light approached them from the southeast. The Norwegian reported that "it resembled the full moon, perhaps a little more elliptical. The light emitted was very intense" and was "bluish on the brim of the object. As it passed immediately overhead, it grew so bright you could see as well as on a sunny day! . . . [I]t released four 'stars' which fell silently to the ground and on landing grew dark. As these 'stars' were released, the fireball too grew dark and after a few seconds we were able to see in the dark again. We could observe an oblong rocket passing us in a perfectly horizontal trajectory about 900 feet above the ground. . . . [I]t was about 10 feet long" (*Aftenposten* [Oslo], August 24).

**Crashes and traces.** In many cases witnesses reported seeing the ghost rockets crash both on land and in water. Debris was recovered in some instances, with results that were either ambiguous or quickly subjected to secrecy. Some examples:

Ockelbo, Sweden, July 9: A silver cigar traveling close to the ground was seen at 2:35 p.m. According to a press account, "It tumbled right down against the ground and was gone in a few moments" (*Morgon-Tidningen*, July 11). Lake Barken, Sweden, July 9: An object that was changing color from blue to green came rapidly out of the northeast and plunged into a deep section of the lake about 350 feet from the witness. Mockjard, Sweden, July 9: A "silver-colored" star descended toward Mount Landholm with a whistling sound. As it came down 175 feet away, apparently about to hit the mountainside, the intense light it cast temporarily blinded the observer, so he could not see the collision. A powerful burning smell lingered for 15 minutes (*Svenska Dagbladet*, July 11). Lake Mjosa, Norway, July 18: Two "missiles" flying close together plunged into the lake, causing the water to splash several feet into the air. The objects had come in from just over the trees, were eight feet long, and had wings set three feet from the nose. The objects looked like those depicted in "pictures of the German flying bomb [the V-1]," according to a British Intelligence report. As they traveled they made a whistling sound, and their wings "fluttered as if they had been made of cloth." They did not explode when they hit the water. Lake Kolmjarv, Sweden, July 19: At noon a gray-



colored, seven-foot-long rocket with wings crashed into this long and narrow lake. The crash was observed by witnesses on the shore. A three-week search by soldiers and others failed to uncover any wreckage, though the search was hampered by deep mud on the lake bottom. Southern Sweden, August 12: A cigar-shaped object about five feet long and trailing smoke barely cleared the roofs of houses in a sea-port town. It continued out to sea and seemed to come down on an islet. Two men went out to investigate, but the islet was too large and overgrown with thickets to make a thorough search possible (*Svenska Dagbladet*, August 14). Southern Sweden, mid-October: Two persons on a lake shore heard a sound reminiscent of a "flock of birds." They saw a dart-shaped object with small wings and a "ball-shaped tip" coming in over the trees. It crashed into the water just past the shoreline and exploded (*Svenska Dagbladet*, October 21).

**Official concerns and conclusions.** On June 13, 1944, a Backebo, Sweden, farmer was plowing when an explosion threw him and his horses to the ground. In the days

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Karl-Gösta Bartoll investigates Lake Kolmjarv, Sweden, after reports of a UFO crash there in July 1946. (Fortean Picture Library)



and weeks that followed, Swedish Air Force investigators collected 10,000 pieces (two and a half tons) of the device that had caused the explosion. From them Allied scientists learned that the Germans had a new missile: the V-2. Thus when the ghost-rocket scare occurred two years later, authorities, not illogically, concluded that the Russians were conducting experiments with the V-2s they had captured from the German rocket base at Peenemunde, now in Stalin's hands.

On June 12 the Swedish Defense Staff ordered all military personnel to report sightings of unusual flying objects to headquarters. Soon U.S. military intelligence personnel were expressing concern about the state of Soviet rocket development.

By now the Swedes had formed a "ghost rocket committee" composed of members of the Research Institute of National Defense, Air Administration, Defense Staff, the Naval Administration, and the Defense Radio Institute. Military investigators had no trouble identifying the cause of many reports: meteors. But other reports were more difficult to account for; the sightings were so frequent, and the descriptions so specifically of structured craft, that natural explanations were not applicable. Norway's military was initially skeptical, however, attributing the reports to the variety of landing lights on high-altitude aircraft. But soon, after its own Air Force personnel saw the "ghost bombs," it would rescind its dismissal of the reports. In one month, July, Swedish official sources counted 500 reports.

In August, after the Swedish Defense Staff requested new radar equipment, Gens. James H. Doolittle and David Sarnoff arrived to discuss the matter with government and military officials, who told them that on several occasions they had tracked the mysterious objects on radar. That same month Swedish Lt. Lennart Neckman of the Defense Staff's Air Defense Division saw something that was "without the slightest doubt . . . a rocket projectile" (*Dagbladet*, August 8). The Swedish Army, according to a mid-month Reuters dispatch, suspected that "Russian technicians are experimenting with new weapons in the Baltic provinces or elsewhere." On August 14 the *New York Times* reported that Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson was "very much interested" in the reports; so, though the fact was not publicized at the time, was U.S. Air Force Intelligence. British Intelligence launched an investigation under the direction of R. V. Jones, an expert on V weapons. Jones was skeptical because no unambiguous wreckage had been found, but members of his staff were convinced that the sighting reports were of missiles.

On August 27 Ossian Goulding of the *London Daily Telegraph* wrote that it was not just the Scandinavians, the British, and the Americans who were concerned about the missile reports; so were the people whom widespread suspicion held accountable for the ghost rockets. Goulding related that a

member of the Swedish Communist Party . . . stated that he and his fellow members are under orders to report through official party channels all available details of the rockets' flights gathered from eyewitnesses or by personal observation. The time they are seen, direction, height, and estimated speed, and especially any landings, are to be reported instantly.

Such reports would go quickly to Soviet officials, who were vehemently denying any responsibility for the sightings. In view of what little the West knew about Soviet rocket technology in 1946, the Soviets were logical suspects, but in fact they were innocent. Almost all the captured German rocket technology and rocket experts had gone to the United States, and it would be a long time before the Russians would catch up with the West in this area.

On October 10 the Swedish Defense Staff declared in a public statement, "Most of the observations are vague and must be treated very skeptically. In some cases, however, clear, unambiguous observations have been made that cannot be explained as natural phenomena, Swedish aircraft, or imagination on the part of the observer. Echo, radar, and other equipment registered readings but gave no clue as to the nature of the objects." Fragments alleged to be of the missiles had proven to be nothing more than ordinary coke or slag.

The Swedish ghost-rocket committee held its last meeting on December 1 and released an official report on the twenty-third. It said, in part:

Information has been received chiefly from four sources: (a) visual observations; (b) radar trackings; (c) radio observations; (d) reports from special sources. . . . Incidents were reported throughout the entire country with a concentration in the middle of Sweden.

On 9 July and 11 August, luminous phenomena were observed at the same time over almost all of Sweden. It is possible that these phenomena were of a celestial nature, and if they are excluded, approximately 50 percent concern luminous phenomena and the rest concern observations of "real" objects. These objects are mainly of two different types: (a) "spool-shaped" without any wings or stabilizing surfaces (42 percent), (b) "spool-shaped" and provided with wings (8 percent). . . .

Approximately 100 impacts have been reported, together with fragments from 30 of these. All have been investigated by the Defense Research Institution. It has been impossible to make certain that any of the objects originated as parts of projectiles or rockets; they have generally been attributed to other sources. . . .

Despite the extensive effort which has been carried out with all available means, there is no actual proof that a test of rocket projectiles has taken place over Sweden. The committee has therefore been forced to decide that the investigation has been unsuccessful and that it was useless to continue the activity in its present form and with the present limited resources. Even if the main part of the report can be referred to as celestial phenomena, the committee cannot dismiss certain facts as being merely public imagination.

Records of the committee's investigations remained classified until May 1983.



**American ghost rockets.** Sightings of phenomena comparable to ghost rockets were also occurring in the United States. As early as June 1, 1945, a sighting of something very much like what would later be called a ghost rocket occurred over Morganton, North Carolina. At 7:30 p.m. observers saw a tube-shaped structure, of shiny aluminum appearance and five or six feet long, streaking toward the northwest, blue flame shooting from its rear. After it vanished in the mountains near Lake James, the witnesses heard an explosion.

On April 5, 1946, Army Air Corps Capt. Jack E. Puckett, then serving as Assistant Chief of Flying Safety on the staff of Gen. Elwood Quesada, and the crew of his C-47 transport were

making a scheduled flight from Langley Field, Virginia, to McDill Field, Tampa, Florida. At approximately 6 p.m. while flying a C-47 at 4000 feet northeast of Tampa I observed what I thought to be a shooting star to the southeast over the Atlantic Ocean. My co-pilot, Lt. Henry F. Glass, and my engineer both observed this object at the same time.

This object continued toward us on a collision course at our exact altitude. At about 1000 yards it veered to cross our path. We observed it to be a long, cylindrical shape approximately twice the size of a B-29, with luminous portholes.

During the sighting, which lasted about three minutes, Puckett and crew noted a stream of fire shooting from the rear of the object; the stream was half the length of the UFO. Traveling at a speed Puckett estimated to be 2000 mph, the object eventually disappeared over the horizon. This UFO is strikingly similar to the one reported in the classic **Chiles-Whitted sighting** of July 1948.

An odd report from New Mexico features the familiar crash motif but also an unusually small object. At 2 p.m. on September 11, as Justin B. Rinaldi of Los Alamos was standing in a friend's backyard in Engle, he heard a loud whirring sound "like that of a strong gust of wind gushing through a pipe." As he looked up, he saw a small black object shoot overhead. Only two or three feet long, it "was pointed at one end and held a narrow body and what appeared to be fins on the tail end. It was traveling at a high rate of speed about 75 feet off the ground. I saw it hit a clump of trees at the Diamond A ranch house, and the branches parted like a great force had struck. I organized a search party, but not a trace of it was found."

**Sequel.** Ghost rockets returned to northern Europe in the early months of 1948. On February 25 the *London Times* reported that according to "Scandinavian visitors to this country," rockets emitting a bluish green flame, "almost invariably seen at 9:30 a.m." and traveling at speeds estimated to be between 4500 and 6750 mph, had been observed at various heights, everywhere from just above treetop level to 25,000 feet. Unlike conventional missiles these left no trail in the sky.

The sightings ended in March, but comparable objects would continue to be reported at various times around the world, in spite of the dominant image of UFOs as "flying saucers." For example, on May 31, 1948, a Wilmington, North Carolina, woman sighted an "oblong object" trailing smoke and moving at an "awful high speed" as it came in from the northwest. Over the Cape Fear River it abruptly slowed down and veered off toward the east. An Air Force investigation ruled out the possibility that this was an airplane.

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## GIANT ROCK INTERPLANETARY SPACECRAFT CONVENTION.

→ See Contactees and Van Tassel, George W.



Sightings of UFOs had been occurring steadily over Papua New Guinea for almost a year before Father William Booth Gill, in the company of 37 other witnesses, experienced one of the most famous **close encounters of the third kind**. Gill's colleagues and fellow Anglican missionaries from Australia were intrigued by the events, and one of them, the Rev. Norman E. G. Cruttwell, was keeping careful records and interviewing witnesses. Gill himself was skeptical, however. When his colleague Kenneth Houston told him of a sighting he had made on October 18, 1958, Gill suggested he had seen the Soviet satellite Sputnik.

On April 9, 1959, Gill did not think to connect UFOs with an unusual light he saw high up on the flank of Mount Pudi near the mission station at Boianai (at the southeastern tip of Papua New Guinea), even when after 10 minutes the light reappeared on the opposite side of the mountain—a distance no human being could have traveled in so short a time. In any case, no one lived up there; the land was arid and remote.

At 1 a.m. on June 21 Gill's assistant Stephen Gill Moi saw an "inverted saucer" in the sky above the mission. On the twenty-sixth he wrote a friend, the Rev. David Durie, who was a UFO buff, and signed himself "Doubting William." "I am almost convinced about the 'visitation' theory," he said, "but my simple mind still requires scientific evidence before I can accept the from-outer-space theory." But before he got a chance to mail the letter, he would have a remarkable experience.

That evening, at 6:45, he spotted a bright white light in the northwestern sky. Thirty-eight persons gathered to watch a large, four-legged, disc-shaped object hover overhead. (Gill would later estimate its angular size to be comparable to that of five full moons lined up end to end.) On top of the object four humanlike figures, their bodies surrounded by illumination, were busy at some unknown task. At various times one or all of the figures would disappear below, only to reappear soon after. At 7:30 the object was lost from view when it ascended into the gathering clouds.

About an hour later other smaller objects arrived on the scene. Gill speculated these might be satellite craft from the original vehicle—the one he thought of as a "mother ship," which again became visible at 8:50. The UFOs remained intermittently visible until 10:50, when clouds covered the view.

The sighting had lasted over four hours. Twenty-five of the observers signed a report of the incident that Gill prepared soon afterwards.

At 6 p.m. the next day, the twenty-seventh, a Saturday, the UFOs and their occupants returned. One was the mother ship with its four occupants; two of the smaller craft could also be seen. Gill later told Cruttwell:

On the large one two of the figures seemed to be doing something near the center of the deck. They were occasionally bending over and rais-



ing their arms as though adjusting or “setting up” something (not visible). One figure seemed to be standing, looking down at us (a group of about a dozen).

The figure stood with his hands on a “rail” like the rail of a ship.

I stretched my arm above my head and waved. To our surprise the figure did the same. Ananias waved both arms over his head; then the two outside figures did the same. Ananias and self began waving our arms, and all four seemed to wave back. There *seemed* to be no doubt that our movements were answered. . . . As dark was beginning to close in, I sent Eric Kodawa for a torch [flashlight] and directed a series of long dashes towards the UFO. After a minute or two of this, the UFO apparently acknowledged by making several wavering motions back and forth (in a sideways direction, like a pendulum). Waving by us was repeated, and this was followed by more flashes of the torch. Then the UFO began slowly to become bigger, apparently coming in our direction. It ceased after perhaps half a minute and came no further. After a further two or three minutes the figures apparently lost interest in us, for they disappeared below deck.

At 6:25 p.m. two figures reappeared to carry on with whatever they were doing before the interruption. [A] blue spotlight came on for a few seconds in succession.

At 6:30 Gill went in to dinner. Half an hour later, when he checked once more, only the “mother ship” remained, but it was smaller—apparently more distant—than before. He went inside to lead a church service. When it was over at 7:45, the sky had clouded over, and there were no UFOs to be seen.

The UFOs showed up for the last time the next evening, June 28, at 6:45. At one point some eight UFOs aligned themselves across a section of the sky. At no time were occupants visible. At 11:20 Gill recorded in his diary the occurrence of a “sharp metallic and loud bang on Mission House roof, as though a piece of metal had dropped from a great height. No roll of ‘object’ down roof slope afterwards. Outside, four UFOs in a circle round station. All high. 11:30 p.m. to bed, and UFOs still there.

“Monday 29/6/59. Roof examined. No apparent mark or dent, which one might expect from last night’s noise.”

**Investigations and theories.** The Rev. Cruttwell collected Gill’s report and others from Anglican missionaries in Papua New Guinea into a monograph, parts of which were reprinted in England’s *Flying Saucer Review*—the first full account ufologists would have of this extraordinary case. Fourteen years later, in 1973, **J. Allen Hynek**, astronomer and former consultant to the U.S. Air Force’s **Project Blue Book**, met with Cruttwell, and the two traveled in a small boat to Boianai. Gill was long gone from the scene—he had left in September 1959—but they were able to find and interview six of the witnesses. Hynek said:



One of them was Annie Laurie Borewa, the Papuan medical assistant who first alerted Father Gill about the UFOs that appeared Saturday night. Annie Laurie Borewa and the others I talked with all agreed on the direction from which the objects had come and the manner in which they came. I found no basic contradictions. Of course they were a little hazy about some things because of the passage of time. But I came away with the impression that, whatever the event was, it must have impressed the heck out of them to have remembered it as vividly as they did. There was never any question on their part that "maybe it happened, maybe it didn't happen"—it *did* happen. They were quite sure of that.

In 1977 Gill visited the United States and spent a few days at the Hynek residence in Evanston, Illinois. Hynek and Allan Hendry, then the chief investigator for the Center for UFO Studies, had Gill point out the positions the various objects had occupied in the sky. From this reconstruction Hynek and Hendry concluded that the "'lesser UFOs' are attributable to bright stars and planets, but *not* the primary object," whose size and absence of movement over three hours ("any astronomical object would have had to move through 45 degrees of arc in that time") ruled out an astronomical explanation, as did the fact that the sketches the witnesses drew independently soon after the sighting all showed a large craft.

Australian ufologist Bill Chalker spoke with Gill in 1995 and subsequently wrote about the interview:

He still remains puzzled by what he saw. . . . [but] he questioned my characterization of some attempts to explain [the sightings] as "silly." He felt that these "explanations" were serious attempts to bring understanding to the events. I think that attitude encapsulates the integrity of Gill and the reality of the affair.

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→ See Montana Film.

GREEN  
FIREBALLS  
AND OTHER  
SOUTHWESTERN  
LIGHTS

## GREEN FIREBALLS AND OTHER SOUTH- WESTERN LIGHTS

At 9:05 on December 5, 1948, a clear Sunday night, the pilot and co-pilot of an Air Force C-47 spotted a bright green flash just west of Las Vegas, New Mexico. The two observers assumed it was a meteor until 22 minutes later, when an identical phenomenon appeared as the aircraft passed some 20 miles northeast of Albuquerque. Capt. William Goade, the pilot, later told Air Force investigators that he had seen an intense green light rise from the east slope of Sandia Park a few miles away and follow a parabolic curve. If this was a flare, Goade thought, it was the weirdest one he had ever seen.

Goade and his copilot, Maj. Roger Carter, radioed the control tower at Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque. An hour and a half later, when a Pioneer Airlines flight landed in Albuquerque, control personnel quizzed crew members about any unusual sightings they might have had that evening, and from them they learned of an appearance of a green light at 9:35 as the aircraft was heading west toward Las Vegas. The airline captain said the pale green light had come straight at him, causing him to swerve the plane to avoid what looked like an imminent collision. The light and its pale green tail curved downward and vanished after a few seconds.

The next day Lt. Col. Doyle Rees, commander of the Seventeenth District Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) at Kirtland, ordered an investigation. On the eighth two AFOSI officers, Capts. Melvin E. Neef and John Stahl, interviewed every agency that might know something about green-flare operations, but all professed ignorance. They decided to check the terrain where the incidents occurred, and so the two men, who were also pilots, flew a T-7 aircraft out of Kirtland in the early evening. Soon they were at 5000 feet. According to the official **Project Blue Book** report, this is what happened next:

At an estimated altitude of 2,000 feet higher than the airplane . . . a brilliant green light was observed coming toward the airplane at a rapid rate of speed from approximately 30 degrees to the left of course, from 60 degrees ENE, to 240 degrees WSW. The object was similar in appearance to a burning green flare of common use in the Air Forces. However, the light was much more intense and the object appeared to be consid-



erably larger than a normal flare. No estimate can be made of the distance or the size of the object since no other object was visible upon which to base a comparison. The object was definitely larger and more brilliant than a shooting star, meteor, or flare. The trajectory of the object when first sighted was almost flat and parallel to the earth. The phenomenon lasted approximately two seconds at the end of which the object seemed to burn out. The trajectory then dropped off rapidly and a trail of glowing fragments reddish orange in color was observed falling toward the ground. The fragments were visible less than a second before disappearing. The phenomenon was of such intensity as to be visible from the very moment it ignited and was observed a split second later.

As word of the incidents got out, witnesses civilian and military came forward to recount their own sightings.

On December 9 Neef informed Lincoln La Paz, director of the Institute of Meteoritics at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, of the recent events. La Paz, who held a Top Secret clearance, had already been consulted by the Air Force on UFO matters. La Paz, an authority on meteors, remarked that the fireballs sounded unlike any meteors with which he was familiar. Subsequently he reviewed his records of the Geminid meteor shower, prominent at that time of year, but they showed nothing about a green color associated with it. He had personally witnessed 414 Geminid meteors since 1915, and not one had been green. Not long afterwards La Paz got a letter from a University of New Mexico student who said he had seen a brilliant green "meteor" at 2 a.m. on December 5.

**Nuclear security.** An incident on the sixth, at the supersecret Sandia Base at Kirtland, was especially disturbing. At 10:55 that evening Atomic Energy Security Service (AESS) officer Joseph Toulouse saw a "greenish flare" one-third the apparent size of the moon. It was visible for three seconds before arching downward slightly and vanishing. Because Sandia was the place where America's atomic weapons were built, this was not an incident to be taken lightly, especially when that year had seen three other unexplained fireball cases, one of them near the Hanford, Washington, nuclear facility.

At 9:02 p.m. on December 12, as La Paz and two Kirtland officers were driving near Bernal, New Mexico, they saw a green ball traveling east to west low over the horizon. As bright as Venus and about one-fourth the apparent diameter of the moon, it stayed horizontal for most of the 2.2 seconds it was in view. Finally, in the last two-tenths of a second, it curved downward and was gone. By fortunate circumstance two AESS inspectors also saw the fireball, enabling La Paz to triangulate its location and altitude and estimate its speed.

When plotted on a map, the 25-mile east-to-west path pointed away from the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, the location of all American nuclear-design work. It was distinctly possible, in other words, that the fireball had flown directly over Los Alamos. But what particularly astonished La Paz was the object's abili-

ty to maintain a horizontal path at an altitude of eight to 10 miles while deep within the earth's atmosphere. In a confidential memo to Rees on December 20, La Paz wrote that the fireball had been too slow, too low, and too silent to be a conventional meteor. Moreover,

none of the green fireballs has a train of sparks or a dust cloud. . . . This contrasts sharply with the behavior noted in cases of meteoritic fireballs—particularly those that penetrate to the very low levels where the green fireball of December 12 was observed. . . . On the basis of the various differences . . . the writer remains of the opinion that the fireball . . . was definitely non-meteoric and that in all probability the same is true of most, if not all, the other bright green fireballs. . . .

La Paz arranged with the AESS to set up a patrol with Speed Graphic cameras to try to photograph the fireballs. Late on December 20, after two nights with no green fireballs, members were packing up the cameras when one of the objects made a characteristically brief appearance. Still, because it was seen by observers at another location at the same time, a triangulation was possible, and La Paz determined that it had taken a short seven-to-eight-mile west-to-east path, straight toward Los Alamos.

At Los Alamos interest in the fireballs inspired the creation of an informal group called the Los Alamos Astrophysical Association, whose members, all scientists and engineers with security clearances, were permitted to examine some classified reports in **Project Sign** files. They agreed with La Paz that the fireballs could not be meteors.

On December 29 a statement from the Fourth Army summed up the aerial-phenomena situation in the Southwest. Between December 5 and 28, it noted, there had been 23 reports of "flares or moving lights." All but two were in New Mexico, and nearly all of these were

in the vicinity of an area bounded in the east by the city of Las Vegas and in the north by Los Alamos. . . . All [of the lights] have been of an intense white or greenish white. The trajectory or path of flight has been north to east, north to west or west to east. Altitude has been reported from 3000 to 20,000 feet above the terrain. . . . Speed has been undetermined except that it seems to be above the supersonic range.

**Deepening mystery.** At 5:54 p.m. on January 30, 1949, many hundreds of people saw a "green meteor" come out of the northwest and vanish southwest of Roswell, New Mexico. Kirtland AFB immediately notified Washington, which passed on word to Wright-Patterson. La Paz, who was called in to organize search teams, hoped to be able to pinpoint the fireball's impact point.

After speaking with dozens of witnesses, La Paz managed a rough triangulation, and search teams set out to recover fragments. Eventually they ended up in the Lamesa, Texas, area. After a few days' fruitless hunt, the searchers gave up. La



Paz was baffled; in the past he had recovered meteorites with considerably fewer resources than he now had at hand.

La Paz's plotting of the object's trajectory indicated a 143-mile-long path from Amarillo to Lamesa, along a north-south track. The fireball had traveled nearly horizontally, starting at 60,000 feet and ending at around 40,000. Its speed was estimated between 25,000 and 50,000 mph. At that altitude and speed witnesses should have heard an ear-shattering sonic boom, but the fireball's passage took place in silence.

On February 8 UCLA geophysicist Joseph Kaplan, visiting the University of New Mexico to lecture on the upper atmosphere, met with La Paz, an old friend, and La Paz filled him in on the green-fireball situation. Kaplan, a member of the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board (AFSAB), found La Paz's report unsettling, and he discussed the matter further with Neef and Maj. William Godsoe, Fourth Army Intelligence liaison officer at the Sandia Base. He said he would alert AFSAB chairman Theodore von Karman and urge an investigation in the name of national defense.

Eight days later a "Conference on Aerial Phenomena" was held at the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, with military representatives and scientists in attendance. (There were, however, no representatives of the Air Force's UFO project, despite a pledge to the contrary. Project Sign, whose personnel had been largely sympathetic to the **extraterrestrial hypothesis** of UFO origin, was being reorganized. On February 11, just five days prior to the conference, Sign became **Project Grudge**, which as its name implied was decidedly unsympathetic to the UFO phenomenon.) La Paz told conference participants that Kaplan had assured him there was no "classified training exercise" of which fireball-like devices were a part. Whereas most meteors are blue-green, the fireballs were being described as pale green or yellow green.

The scientists urged that a network of instrument stations be put in place so that the fireballs could be photographed and analyzed with instruments at the moment of their appearance.

Afterwards the AFOSI district office at Kirtland sent a priority Secret message to its headquarters and to Air Materiel Command (AMC) at Wright-Patterson pleading for assistance and advice. In its reply headquarters asked the Kirtland office what were the "instructions and/or equipment furnished you by Air Materiel Command regarding aerial phenomena." None, Kirtland responded, then went on to complain that AMC, which oversaw Sign and Grudge, had broken its promise to attend the Los Alamos meeting. Apparently AMC was indifferent both to the reports and to AFOSI's considerable investigative effort.

The same day, April 23, Capt. Roger Groseclose and Lt. Howard Smith were sent from AMC to Kirtland to mollify the unhappy personnel at AFOSI, Kirtland. The following day they had an unpleasant exchange with Capt. Neef, La Paz, Agent Jack

Boling, and the Fourth Army's Maj. Godsoe (who had attended the February 16 meeting) in the AFOSI office. Godsoe said that it didn't seem worth AFOSI's time to conduct investigations for AMC. The AMC officers retorted that the fireballs were no concern of an Army officer's anyway. Neef in turn wondered if they were any concern of AMC's. After all, green fireballs were different from flying discs. Groseclose and Smith said they were concerned with all types of anomalous aerial phenomena. By this time thoroughly disgusted, Godsoe left the room.

Before the meeting broke up, the participants were able to agree with the now-absent Godsoe's recommendation that AMC set up a network of observation posts with cameras, surveyor's transits, and trained personnel. In addition, there should be a concerted air and ground search for fragments. Finally, Neef emphasized to Groseclose and Smith that personnel charged with protection of the Atomic Energy Commission bases were "becoming alarmed as to the possible threat to their security."

On the nineteenth, four days before the confrontation at its office, AFOSI at Kirtland sent a list of all the fireball reports it had investigated (39 in all), from December 5 to April 12, to Air Force headquarters. The cover letter noted,

The common characteristics of most of the incidents are: a. Green color, sometimes described as greenish-white, bright green, yellow-green, or blue green. b. Horizontal path, sometimes with minor variations. c. Speed less than that of a meteor, but more than any other known type of aircraft. d. No sound associated with observation. e. No persistent trail or dust cloud. f. Period of visibility from one to five seconds.

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**Little lights.** A new type of UFO phenomenon began manifesting in central Texas on March 6, when Army security patrols near Killeen Base, a highly sensitive nuclear-weapons storage site inside Camp Hood, spotted strange bursts or streaks of light in the evening sky.

The first sighting took place outside the base perimeter at 8:30 when Pvts. Martin Fensterman and Frank Luisi spotted a flash of pale blue-white light in the northeast. Twenty-five minutes later and a quarter-mile away, Pvt. Harold Moore saw a white light with an orange trail flash across the western horizon. And at 9 p.m., from inside the base boundary, Sgt. Hubert Vickery and Pfc. John Ransom noticed a pale blue-white light streaking across the western sky low over the horizon. Between 1:15 and 2 a.m. four more reports of a brilliant burst of light like a "flash bulb" came in from patrols around Killeen Base.

Almost exactly 24 hours later, on March 8, two infantrymen half a mile apart sighted apparently separate streaking bright lights—one white, the other yellowish red. In the latter case the UFO covered 60 degrees of sky, appearing and disappearing at about the same angle above the horizon. Cpl. Luke Sims was able to run 10 paces to a field telephone before it vanished.



All of the observers insisted that what they had seen were not meteors. They were more like flares, they said, but they could not find anyone who might have been shooting them off. Nonetheless, Capt. Horace McCulloch, Assistant G-2 of the Second Armored Division at Camp Hood, was certain they must be flares. He decided to gather the witnesses at their respective sighting locations and test-fire various kinds of flares. The test was set for the evening of the seventeenth. But when Capt. McCulloch and his party were driving between Camp Hood and the Killeen Base area to prepare the proposed display, they saw the phenomenon themselves. Knowing it was no flare, McCulloch placed the entire base on alert.

There were seven sightings in all that night. Each time multiple observers in different locations were able to effect precise triangulations.

In mid-April, amid growing alarm among Fourth Army Intelligence personnel in San Antonio, investigators remarked on how the lights had done a "good job of bracketing the 'Q' Area" ("Q" refers to nuclear materials).

**Green fireballs continued.** In New Mexico the green-fireball sightings continued, at the rate of half a dozen or so a month. Meanwhile AMC and its new Project Grudge responded only perfunctorily to the reports they were receiving from the Fourth Army and the Seventeenth District AFOSI office.

Observing this exhibition of apathy, Lt. Col. Doyle Rees, Seventeenth District AFOSI Commander, wired headquarters on April 25 to ask if he could send two of his men to AMC to find out if Grudge planned to do anything. But as it turned out, not only AFOSI was monitoring Grudge's inactivity but Air Force Intelligence (AFOIN) was doing so as well. Before Rees had a response from AMC, Dr. Kaplan arrived in Albuquerque, having been directed to go there by no less than AFOIN Director Maj. Gen. Charles Cabell and Air Force Scientific Advisory Board chairman Theodore von Karman, who wanted Kaplan to examine the possibility of setting up a full-scale field investigation. They stressed that Grudge was not to be informed of it.

On the morning of the twenty-seventh, Rees, Kaplan, and La Paz briefed personnel with the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project at Sandia Base. La Paz outlined plans for a network of visual, photographic, spectrographic, and radar observation covering the Los Alamos, Sandia (Albuquerque), and Holloman Air Force Base/White Sands Proving Ground areas, with extensive field searches and aerial reconnaissance to locate fragments. Scientist W. D. Crozier offered to handle air sampling intended to detect any dust residue from the fireballs' passage. Rees urged that the Camp Hood/Killeen Base area also fall under scrutiny. Kaplan said he would recommend La Paz to direct the probe.

**Little lights again.** On the nights of April 16 and 18, after two weeks of inactivity, the mysterious "flares" were observed once more at Killeen. The most spectacular incidents, however, would occur on the twenty-seventh, beginning with a bizarre encounter at 9:20 p.m. when two members at a patrol station southeast of

Killeen were startled to see a blinking violet light no more than an inch and a half in diameter; it was only 10 or 12 feet from them and six or seven feet above the ground. The observation lasted a minute, during which the tiny object passed through the branches of a tree, thus unmistakably marking its location.

Five minutes later and scarcely two miles away, four Army men saw a four-inch bright light with a two- to four-inch "metallic" cone attached to the back. When first spotted in the northeast, it was six to seven feet off the ground and 600 feet away, silently approaching the witnesses in a level flight at 60 or 70 mph. It disappeared suddenly to the southwest at a distance of 150 feet. Then, just 12 minutes later, a two-inch-wide white light appeared 100 feet away to the north-northeast. It was flying in a zig-zag fashion in a level path six feet above the ground. At its closest it was 150 feet away. Like the one that had come before it, it vanished abruptly. A third light showed up at 9:39 in the west-southwest. It was visible for a maximum of 30 seconds.

The next night the lights were back. Beginning at 8:30, several security patrols comprising a total of 12 men reported nine separate sightings southeast of Killeen. Most of the slow-moving lights changed color from white to red to green. One was white with a red blinking light, and one had the previously observed "cone-shaped affair" at its rear. On one occasion four lights appeared together; on another, eight to 10 showed up in each other's company. (The light with the cone was seen amid this latter set of objects.) Despite extensive searches no debris or other evidence of flares or similar devices could be found.

In early May the Fourth Army approached AFOSI in San Antonio to ask it to help in the investigation of the Killeen lights. Col. Lumsden declined, explaining it was awaiting direction from headquarters in Washington. But the harried Army people were disinclined to take no for an answer, and on May 5 they got AFOSI personnel, along with others from the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), Army Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC), the FBI, and the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project (AFSWP), to show up at Camp Hood for the first of a series of weekly meetings to discuss the strange phenomena.

The Army and Navy representatives agreed that the phenomena were unexplained and thus a legitimate source of "grave concern." AFOSI and the FBI expressed no opinion, but the AFSWP people expressed confidence that a natural explanation would be found. Fourth Army retorted that doubts about the quality of its witnesses' observations could be resolved if a formal observing network were set up. Unfortunately, it did not have enough agents to conduct a proper investigation.

Out of this confused state of affairs came general agreement that, first, an observation system with trained artillery observers was desirable and, second, if such sightings were then confirmed, AMC in Ohio should be asked to send a technical intelligence team to the scene. For reasons of its own the Army did not reveal it had already put such a network into operation the day before. Nonetheless, it took the entire group out to Killeen at 1:00 p.m. to inspect the security procedures



and “tentatively” select sites for the Army observation posts—sites that in fact had been selected and manned at least 24 hours earlier.

The next day Col. Lumsden of the San Antonio AFOSI office informed headquarters that the “matter has reached a fairly serious stage and some positive action is mandatory.” He pointedly did not send a copy of his message to Grudge. Headquarters responded quickly with an order to Lumsden to investigate all sightings and other relevant information. There was also a reminder that Grudge was to be kept fully informed.

At AFOSI in Albuquerque Lt. Col. Rees set up a 24-hour visual-photographic observation post on top of the Sandia Mountains northeast of town. Following Kaplan’s suggestion, the post was equipped with a wide-angle-lens camera fitted with a spectrographic grating. The Fourth Army system was more elaborate, except that it lacked cameras. But it did have four six-man fixed-observation posts equipped with instruments to obtain directional bearings and linked by radio and field telephone. One of the posts (all were located within a few miles southeast of Killeen) served as the plotting center to coordinate and triangulate the UFO sightings and directional information from all observers. Two trucks served as a roving “Artillery Patrol” observation post linked by radio to the plotting center. Each day the “Artillery Training Force” (the deliberately misleading name for the classified UFO patrol) got new orders.

When the Fourth Army plan was finally revealed on May 19 to members of the weekly intelligence conference, there was no more talk of hysteria or observer error. In Washington the word was that the fireballs were “natural phenomena.” Or so concluded Kaplan, who thought they were a new type of auroral effect. He conceded, however, that their rapid horizontal motion and their appearances so far from the magnetic polar regions were “difficult to explain.” AFOIN “tentatively accepted” the explanation despite its problems, and the Geophysical Sciences Branch of the Directorate of Research and Development, USAF Headquarters, began an evaluation of the reports. If its findings “substantiate this tentative conclusion,” Col. John W. Schweizer of AFOIN said in a September 1 letter to AFOIN’s director, “reports that fall in the ‘fireball’ category will no longer be included in Hq. Air Materiel Command and Directorate of Intelligence, Hq. USAF, investigative activity on unidentified aerial incidents.” AFOIN rejected an Army request for further facilities to study the fireballs from field locations.

The sightings continued into August. The most spectacular took place on June 6. At 9:05 p.m. both the plotting center and observation post number two spotted a hovering orange light. When they triangulated the UFO’s location, they determined it was three miles south of the observation post and four and a half miles south of the plotting center, hovering a mile in the air. This was, however, no “little light” but something 30 to 70 feet in size. Suddenly it started moving in level flight, then burst into small particles. The sighting had lasted not quite three minutes.

On July 24 a green fireball was observed falling close to Socorro, New Mexico. The next morning Crozier collected dust samples from the School of Mines campus in the city. As La Paz reported to Lt. Col. Rees on August 17, "These collections, to Dr. Crozier's evident surprise, were found to contain not only the first copper particles he had found in air dust collections but these particles were of unusually large size—up to 100 microns in maximum dimensions." When La Paz and other scientists and Air Force representatives met with Crozier the following day, Crozier said he thought it was possible the copper particles had blown off the roof or out of the gutters of a campus building; only if similar particles were found in open and distant country could they be deemed unquestionably significant. Subsequent searches found just that.

Still, Crozier persisted in calling the results "inconclusive" even as La Paz suspected otherwise, writing to Rees, "I wish to emphasize most emphatically that if future more detailed work shows that the numerous copper particles found by Dr. Crozier and [his assistant] Mr. [Ben] Seely *are* indeed floating down from green fireballs, then the fireballs are not conventional meteorites. Copper is one of [the] rarest of the elements found in meteorites. . . . In fact, I know of no case in which even the tiniest particle of copper has been reported in a dust collection supposedly of meteoritic origin." La Paz urged that further air and ground samples be taken in areas where the fireballs had been seen.

In a memo of the same date addressed to La Paz, Rees reported on investigations of "anomalous luminous phenomena" seen between early June and early August. "Many of the green fireballs now appearing descend on nearly vertical paths," he wrote, "whereas, in earlier months[,] almost all of the green fireballs observed move almost horizontally. . . . There appears to be a concentration of New Mexico incidents near weekends, especially on Sunday and near the hour of 8:00 (in the interval from 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.)."

**Project Twinkle.** In early summer Kaplan met with Norris Bradbury, the Los Alamos laboratory director, who urged that a classified scientific conference be held to discuss the fireballs, perhaps when Kaplan was passing through in early September. Kaplan then told AFOIN Director Cabell that AFOIN should organize a photographic and spectrographic patrol that could obtain quantitative scientific data on the phenomena.

Because of budgetary and personnel limitations AFOIN could not act on the suggestion, but later in the summer Kaplan visited the Geophysics Research Directorate of AMC's Cambridge Research Laboratories in Boston and discussed what could be done. In Washington soon afterwards, Kaplan met with personnel in the Geophysical Sciences Branch of Air Force Research and Development to set plans in motion. On September 14 that branch ordered the new AMC commander Lt. Gen. Benjamin Chidlaw to have his Boston labs evaluate the New Mexico and Texas sightings and consider the creation of an instrument network. AMC was directed to send representatives from Boston to a meeting in New Mexico.



At the meeting, held on October 14 at Los Alamos, 16 representatives of AFOSI, AMC (Kaplan), Fourth Army, the FBI, the AESS, AFSWP, and Los Alamos scientists considered the situation. AMC's representative was Maj. Frederic Oder, director of the Boston geophysics lab. No one disputed the reality of the phenomena, and the group could not agree on an explanation. One problem was the peculiar geographical concentration of reports: all in New Mexico. What kind of natural phenomenon would appear in only one place and only recently? The group proposed that a field project be run under Oder's Boston lab, with La Paz's active cooperation.

On November 3 Kaplan brought the plan to AFSAB, and on December 20 approval was granted. By February 21, 1950, Project Twinkle had set up its first operations post, manned by two observers who scanned the sky over Holloman AFB with theodolite, telescope, and camera.

On February 2 La Paz, citing the press of academic duties, was forced to withdraw from further participation in the project.

Despite high hopes Twinkle proved something of a hapless enterprise. A few lines from its final report, dated December 11, 1951, give a sense of what its problems were:

Some photographic activity occurred on 27 April and 24 May [1950], but simultaneous sightings by both cameras were not made, so that no information was gained. On 30 August 1950, during a Bell aircraft missile launching, aerial phenomena were observed over Holloman Air Force Base by several individuals; however, neither Land-Air nor Project personnel were notified and, therefore, no results were acquired. On 31 August 1950, the phenomena were again observed after a V-2 launching. Although much film was expended, proper triangulation was not effected, so that again no information was acquired. . . . Generally, the results . . . may be described as negative. Although the photographic theodolites functioned continuously, the grating cameras functioned very little, since the military personnel assigned to operate them had been withdrawn due to the needs concerned with the Korean situation. The facilities for the electromagnetic frequency measurements that were to be provided by the Signal Corps Engineering Laboratories were not utilized due to the fact that the frequency of occurrence of these phenomena did not justify the \$50,000 a year transfer of funds to the Signal Corps which would be required to carry out such a monitoring facility.

After that the number of sightings declined significantly. In the summer of 1951 Maj. Edward A. Doty took control of the project. In an August 27 conference at Holloman, Doty expressed skepticism. Holloman's commanding officer, Doty said, wanted to cease allocating funds for Twinkle, strip it of its official status, and maintain it simply on stand-by status.

Twinkle closed down in December. Its final report stated that the investigators had no "conclusive opinion concerning the aerial phenomena of interest." Nonetheless, it went on to speculate that the "earth may be passing through a region in space of high meteoric population. Also, the sun-spot maxima in 1948 perhaps in some way may be a contributing factor."

Still, to many of those who had seen or investigated the fireballs (or both), they remained a troubling memory. In 1953 when Capt. **Edward J. Ruppelt** was head of Blue Book, he met with La Paz for the first time and asked him what he thought the fireballs were. According to Ruppelt, "He said that all he cared to say was that he didn't think they were a natural phenomenon. He thought that maybe someday one would hit the earth and the mystery would be solved. He hoped they were a natural phenomenon." At Los Alamos, Ruppelt would write, scientists theorized that the fireballs were projectiles fired into the earth's atmosphere from an extraterrestrial spacecraft.

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## GULF BREEZE CASE

On November 11, 1987, as the story has it, Edward Walters, a businessman from Gulf Breeze, Florida (pop. 6000), had his first encounter with a UFO. At 5 p.m. he was working in his office when he saw something glowing behind a 30-foot pine in the front yard. Curious, he stepped outside, where he got a clearer view of the source: a top-shaped craft with a row of dark squares and smaller openings between them ("portholes") across the midsection. There was a bright, luminous ring on the bottom.



Walters stepped back into his office, grabbed an old Polaroid camera, went outside again, and snapped a picture just as the craft moved from behind the tree. He took three more pictures as the object, about 150 feet away, continued to drift in a northeasterly direction.

Walters got some more film and took another picture. Now the object was moving closer. He ran out to the street intending to snap yet more pictures. Suddenly the UFO was above him, and a blue beam hit him, paralyzing him and lifting him several feet off the ground. A foul odor enveloped him. Then a "computer-like" voice inside his head said, "We will not harm you." A female voice began to speak, and images of dogs appeared, "flashing . . . just as if they were turning the pages of a book," Walters would write. Then he fell hard on the pavement, the blue beam gone. He turned around on his back and looked for the UFO. It, too, was gone.

On the seventeenth Walters went to *Gulf Breeze Sentinel* editor Duane Cook and showed the pictures to him. He told Cook that the photos had been given to him by a Mr. X, who desired no publicity. Walters also produced a letter allegedly from X but really from Walters himself. The photographs and the letter were run in the paper two days later.

**Confusion and controversy.** Soon Walters and his family were claiming a bewildering variety of **close encounters**, including **abduction** incidents, and Ed Walters was busily producing yet more photographs of what he claimed were large UFOs cavorting in the night sky over Gulf Breeze. Other residents reported their own sightings, and some insisted that their UFOs were identical to those they had seen in the local newspaper (Walters's photographs, plus others from two anonymous correspondents, never identified; one signed his name as "Believer Bill").

By early 1988 the Gulf Breeze affair had ignited a furious dispute among ufologists. The Mutual UFO Network (MUFON), whose investigators were first on the scene, championed the case practically from its onset. The J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) was harshly critical, also practically from the onset, because its investigator in the area was certain Walters was lying.

On February 18 and 23, 1988, Walters underwent polygraph examinations by Harvey W. McLaughlin, Jr., a professional with no previous involvement in UFO controversies. The tests covered both his sightings and his photographs. McLaughlin concluded that Walters was telling the truth as he saw it. In June a prominent Florida clinical psychologist, Dan Overlade, met Walters and administered a battery of psychological tests, the results of which indicated to Overlade that Walters exhibited no psychopathologies or other mental disorders. Skeptics in the UFO community had suggested that Walters probably had a sociopathic personality, which would explain why he had passed the polygraph tests. Overlade did not think this was the case.

Though early in the affair the Walterses reportedly turned down a six-figure book offer from a paperback publisher, *Publishers Weekly* announced in its April 7,



1989, issue that publisher William Morrow had paid the Walterses \$200,000 for a book. Meanwhile, a production company had put down \$100,000 against \$450,000 for mini-series rights. The book, *The Gulf Breeze Sightings*, was released in February 1990. A sequel, *UFO Abductions at Gulf Breeze*, appeared in January 1994.

Photoanalysts disagreed sharply on whether the photographs depicted large objects (presumably genuine UFOs) or small models, but in due course damaging information emerged to cast doubt on Walters's veracity. For example, Zan Overall, a California ufologist, established that Walters's contrary assertions notwithstanding, he knew how to double-expose photographs well before he started producing UFO pictures.

Even more damaging was a revelation in the June 10, 1990, issue of the *Pensacola News Journal*. The opening sentence reported, "A model spaceship resembling the UFOs reportedly seen above Gulf Breeze has been found in a house once occupied by the man whose photographs started a UFO craze that has focused worldwide attention on this community." The model was found in the house the Walterses had occupied during the alleged UFO visitations. The house had been unoccupied for 11 months before another family, the Menzers, moved in. Sometime after the move, Robert Menzer told Craig Myers of the *News Journal*, "I was going to install an icemaker, and I needed to turn off the water. I was fooling around in the attic, and I was moving insulation aside when I saw it. I never would have found it if I hadn't been looking for the pipe."

The model was nine inches long across the top and five inches deep. It was made of, Myers wrote, "two nine-inch foam plates attached to two six-inch foam

## GULF BREEZE CASE

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Ed Walters (with his then-wife Frances) of Gulf Breeze, Florida, took many controversial photographs said to depict UFOs at close range. (Fortean Picture Library)



plates; a six-inch square blue-color gel (plastic film) and one six-inch round orange paper ring; a 3.5 inch long plastic tube; and a two-inch wide paper ring between the nine-inch plates." Drawn and punched-out "windows" surrounded a rim two-thirds of the way around the model. They were done on drafting paper, on the reverse side of which were dimensions for a house in Walters's handwriting.

When confronted, Walters denied knowing anything about the model and remarked that if he were a hoaxer he would have been crazy to leave behind such damaging evidence. He declined to take a polygraph test, pointing out that he had already taken two others that had specifically asked him if he had faked his photographs and that, moreover, this fact hadn't seemed to stop anyone from calling him a liar. Later Walters would travel to New Orleans to undergo a voice-stress analysis test, and the examiner would declare that he was telling the truth. Psychological-stress evaluation (PSE) is a controversial lie-detection method that works on the premise that measurable tension in the voice indicates the speaker is not telling the truth.

Soon afterwards a local man confirmed that the house depicted in Walters's writing on the draft paper was one that Walters had designed for him (it was never built) in September 1989, more than a year after the supposed UFO events had ceased. Walters and his supporters argued that the model had been planted by enemies who wanted to discredit the case and that the draft paper had been stolen from the garbage at his new home.

That, however, was not the end of the affair. Exactly one week later, on June 17, the *News Journal* was reporting the confession of a 22-year-old former Gulf Breeze resident, later identified as Tom Smith, Jr. In a 30-minute phone interview with Mayor Ed Gray, Police Chief Jerry Brown (both long-time vocal skeptics of Walters's claims, which had divided Gulf Breezites as much as they had ufologists), and two reporters, Smith said he had watched Walters fake UFO pictures using double exposures. He alleged that in November 1987 he saw Walters take a photograph of a saucer model, which he illuminated with a flashlight. Then he took the camera outside, pointed it at the sky, and snapped a second exposure on the same frame of film. The result was a "UFO" apparently flying through the air above them.

Smith further charged that not long afterwards, Walters asked him to take five photos Walters had faked to the *Gulf Breeze Sentinel* (which had supported the case from the beginning) and to say Smith had snapped them. "He wanted to use me as another witness," Smith said. "I had about a day to think about it, and I talked it over with Ed, and I just said it was a fraud, it wasn't real smart. I can understand a practical joke. But when I realized that he was going to go all the way through with it, I just didn't want to hurt my father's reputation, and I didn't want to get in the middle of a court case."

Smith's father and mother backed up their son's testimony and said they had urged him to come forward. They had known of the **hoax** for a long time, they asserted. Young Smith charged that the entire Walters family were in on the hoax

and that alleged landing traces found behind the house were manufactured with an overturned trampoline.

The confession, however, did not end the controversy. Bruce Maccabee, one of the premier photoanalysts in ufology, continued to argue for the authenticity of Walters's pictures. In 1997 he and Walters co-authored *UFOs Are Real . . . Here's the Proof*, with Walters providing the photos and videos and Maccabee an analysis of each.

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## HEAVEN'S GATE

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**A**t 3:30 p.m. on March 26, 1997, the San Diego County Sheriff's Office took a 911 call from an anonymous informant (later identified as Richard Ford, alias Rio D'Angelo) reporting a group suicide at a house in San Diego's plush Rancho Santa Fe neighborhood. Two investigating deputies found 39 bodies of identically dressed, androgynous-looking men and women. Autopsies established that each had drunk a lethal combination of vodka and barbiturates and smothered their faces with plastic bags. Some of the men had been surgically castrated. Videotaped statements left behind explained that the suicides, members of a cult called Heaven's Gate, were leaving their earthly "vehicles" (bodies) behind and expected to board a spacecraft trailing the Hale-Bopp comet.

The story generated headlines all over the world. Within a day or two reporters had pieced together a story of a cult whose origins could be traced to the 1970s and to two individuals who first called themselves "The Two."

The Two, Marshall Herff Applewhite and Bonnie Lu Nettles, met in 1972 at a Houston hospital where Applewhite, then in his early 40s, was being treated for psychiatric problems and where Nettles, four years older, worked as a nurse. Applewhite had been a professor of music at the University of St. Thomas and later director of music at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Houston. Nettles had long been interested in the occult.



According to sociologist Robert W. Balch, Applewhite had long sought a platonic helper who, among other things, would relieve him of the burden of a confused sexuality that had been responsible for emotional and employment difficulties. Nettles proved to be that person. Not coincidentally, the doctrine the couple would preach rejected sexuality.

Leaving Houston in 1973, they wandered through various western states, eventually establishing themselves in a camp along Oregon's Rogue River. There Applewhite and Nettles experienced a revelation that convinced them that they were the two witnesses whose appearance on earth in its last days was prophesied in Revelation 11.

In what may have been their first attempt to reach out to the larger world, they showed up unannounced at the Oklahoma City headquarters of the International UFO Bureau and spoke to its director Hayden Hewes. Hewes would recall that they introduced themselves simply as "Herff" and "Bonnie," here to give him a message of utmost importance. They gave Hewes permission to record their words. They wanted him to inform the world that, in Herff's words, "there are two individuals who are here to show and tell how man may make the ascension into the next evolutionary level." They said that one day they would be assassinated; three days later they would return to life in full view of members of the news media.

In the spring of 1975, letters attributed to Human Individual Metamorphosis (HIM) circulated through the occult and New Age community announcing that prophets from the "next kingdom" fully as important as Jesus, and with the same mission, were now on earth and about to make their presence known:

There are two individuals here now who have also come from that next kingdom, incarnate as humans, awakened, and will soon demonstrate the same proof of overcoming death. They are "sent" from that kingdom by the "Father" to bear the same truth that was Jesus'. This is like a repeat performance, except this time by two (a man and a woman), to restate the truth Jesus bore, restore its accurate meaning, and again show that any individual who seeks that kingdom will find it through the same process. The two who are the "actors" in this "theater" are in the meantime doing all they can to relate this truth as accurately as possible so that when their bodies recover from their "dead" state (resurrection) and they leave (UFOs), those left behind will have clearly understood the formula.

The followers would have to abandon family, friends, and possessions and devote themselves entirely to the metamorphosis, a "chemical and biological change" that would render their bodies indestructible.

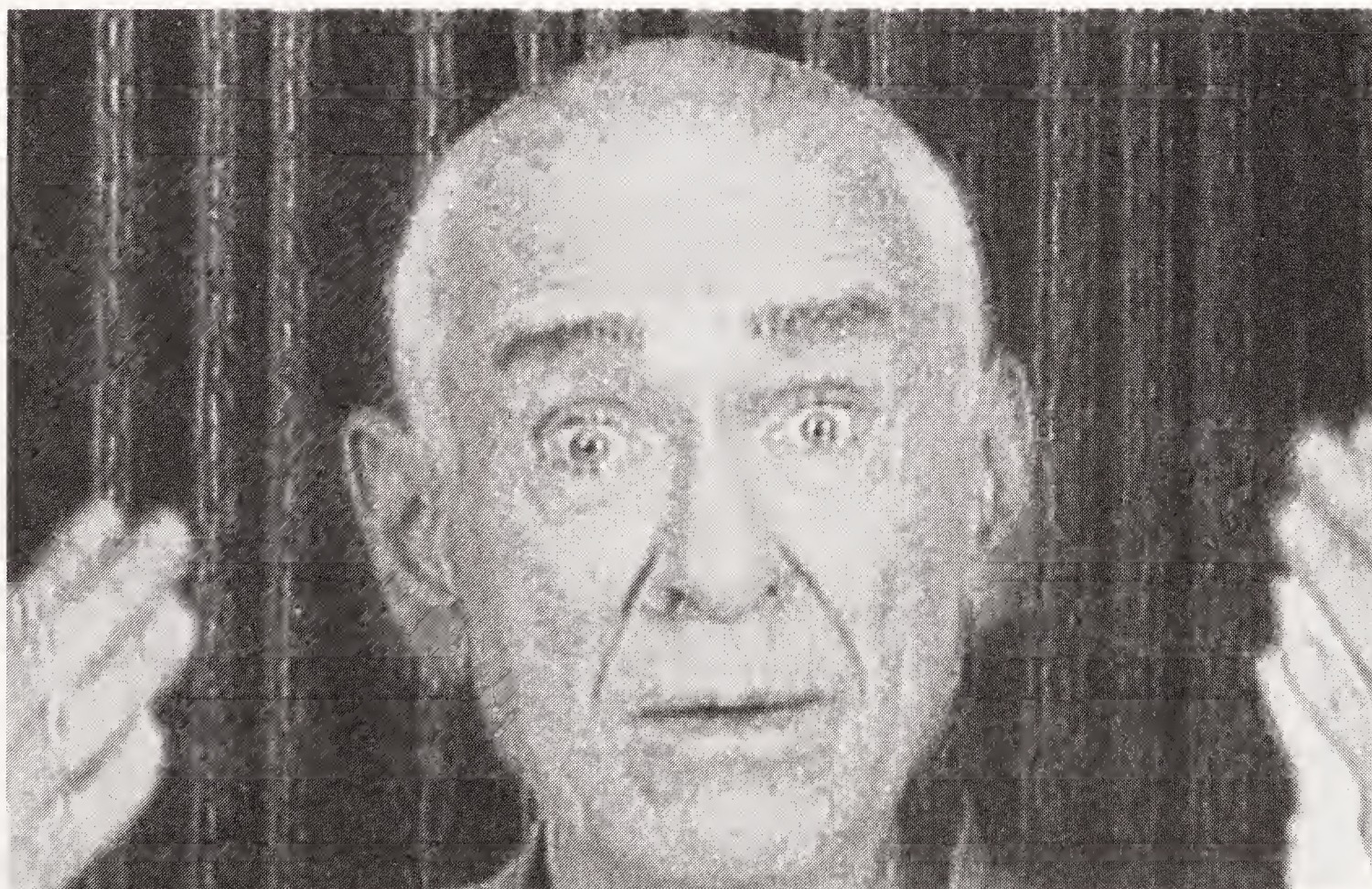
Applewhite and Nettles's first more or less public appearance was in Los Angeles in the spring of 1975, at the home of psychic Joan Culpepper. By now they called themselves Bo (Applewhite) and Peep (Nettles) and refused to speak of, or



even acknowledge, prior personal histories. Their message so mesmerized 24 of their listeners that they made the decision to become the sheep of Bo and Peep. They left their families and joined the Two in their wanderings through the West. Over the next several months the Two and their entourage held other meetings in California and Colorado, bringing more faithful into the fold.

Except by those directly affected, these events were little noticed. All that would change after a meeting held at a Waldport, Oregon, hotel on September 14, 1975. When 20 of the 300 audience members disappeared in the meeting's wake, the Oregon State Police and the Lincoln County Sheriff's Department launched an investigation. Reporters learned that those who stayed behind were unsure of what they heard. The message seemed vague to them. As one said, "I guess the implication was that you might leave in a UFO." Some listeners remembered that this departure would take place from a camp somewhere in Colorado. Confirmation of this idea came via postcard from Colorado. One of the Oregon missing informed his mother, "I am leaving this earth and will not see you anymore."

Six weeks after the Oregon meeting, University of Montana sociologists Robert Balch and David Taylor located Bo and Peep's followers in Arizona and, disguising themselves as believers, joined the group. By this time Bo and Peep had disappeared, fearing that they would be assassinated before they had fulfilled their mission. The followers believed they would soon rejoin the Two and witness the "Demonstration," in which Bo and Peep would be martyred, rise from the dead three and a half days later, and ascend to heaven on a cloud of light. A few days later UFOs would carry away the most devout followers.



Heaven's Gate cult leader Marshall Applewhite, who believed that upon death he and his followers would board a UFO traveling behind the comet Hale-Bopp, led 39 people to mass suicide in March 1997. (AP/World Wide)



Before leaving the faithful, Bo and Peep—who by now had attracted 150 to 200 followers, in Balch and Taylor's estimation—broke them up into several autonomous families, typically consisting of 12 to 14 persons, most in their early 20s and more or less equally divided between men and women. Each member was assigned a partner, if possible of the opposite sex, though sexual, romantic, and even friendly relations were forbidden; instead the two individuals, who were to be together 24 hours a day, would observe each other closely and thus come to intimate knowledge of the human qualities the other had to overcome before he or she could experience metamorphosis. Beyond communicating for necessary business, the partners were to have as little as possible to do with the others in the family.

The families went their own ways, each moving wherever it felt it was being led. They lived on the food secured through begging and camped out every night. Periodically the families would stop, hold meetings, and recruit new members even as some of the original members left for greener spiritual pastures. Balch and Taylor noted that interaction with audiences "was limited to discussing the message, and the answers given by members of the cult were often so stereotyped that they sounded like tape-recordings." Mostly "these meetings produced nothing more than catcalls and insults, or at best interested questions," according to Balch and Taylor.

During the day members were to spend virtually all of their time "tuning in"—establishing a psychic connection with the people of the next level (outer space) to which they would go once the "process" was completed. Most members were persons who had long been drawn to occultism and unorthodox religious beliefs. Others were hippies and dropouts. Few, in other words, had appeared out of nowhere. The eclectic mix of metaphysical teachings about flying saucers, reincarnation, psychic power, and the like was nothing new to them; the only novelty was the particular manner in which Bo and Peep had put them together.

Followers believed that the Demonstration would occur in Oakland, California, in early October. But when the Two failed to appear (the meeting was a **hoax** engineered by a newspaper), many followers became disillusioned. The attrition rate was high, but the group survived because new members continually replaced the old. Only a small minority stayed on for any length of time.

In late 1975 or early 1976 the Two resurfaced and set about to re-energize the movement. A significant development took place at a meeting in the Midwest where, after enduring the taunts of hecklers, Peep declared that "the doors to the next level are closed." In other words, the missionary work was over, even though fewer than 100 persons in the earth's population had been harvested. Bo and Peep took their followers to a mountain camp outside Laramie, Wyoming. Those whose faith in the Two was less than total were asked to leave. Members were given uniforms and subjected to psychic and other training to prepare them for life in space. In the fall of 1976, the group moved to Salt Lake City.

Not long afterwards two members received inheritances and turned the money over to Bo and Peep, who used it to buy houses in the Denver and Dallas-Fort Worth

areas. Members lived in these “crafts” essentially isolated from the rest of the world. They operated on a strict time schedule with their every movement monitored.

The group pursued its nomadic ways and dropped out of sight for some years. In 1985 Bonnie Lu Nettles, now calling herself “Do” (to Applewhite’s “Te,” as in the musical tone), died of cancer or, as one follower told a reporter a decade later, “returned to that next level to resume her position there.” The group was renamed the Total Overcomers, and in the 1990s members gave occasional public testimony. They warned of the imminent destruction of earthly life and also of the schemes of evil “Luciferian” extraterrestrials.

In 1995 the group, now known as Heaven’s Gate, settled in San Diego and started a computer business, Higher Source, which designed commercial web sites. It also established its own web site. In October 1996 it moved into the mansion where members, including Applewhite, would die.

On March 31, 1997, the body of another suicide, Robert Nichols, was found in his trailer home near Marysville, California. A handwritten note stated, “I’m going on the spaceship with Hale-Bopp to be with those who have gone before me.” Nichols had no known association with Applewhite’s group. On the other hand, Wayne Cooke had been involved as recently as 1994, and his wife Suzanne had been among the dead at Rancho Santa Fe. He committed suicide at a motel in nearby Encinitas on May 7. A companion and fellow believer, Charles Humphreys, was taken in critical condition to a local hospital and survived the attempt.

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## HILL ABDUCTION CASE

On September 26, 1961, when a Portsmouth, New Hampshire, woman sat down to compose a letter, she could not have known that within a few years she and her husband would become two of the most famous UFO witnesses ever. Nor could she have suspected that their experience would expose a whole new, heretofore-unsuspected aspect of the UFO phenomenon. At the time she was simply someone who needed reassurance and information.

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The letter was addressed to **Donald E. Keyhoe**, who was then America's leading ufologist. Soon after their experience on the night of September 19-20, the witnesses, Barney and Betty Hill, sought out UFO literature in the local library and there found Keyhoe's 1955 book, *The Flying Saucer Conspiracy*. Betty's letter was forwarded to the Washington, DC, headquarters of the **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP), which Keyhoe directed.

Betty Hill reported that as they drove through a national forest in New Hampshire's White Mountains, a UFO had paced their automobile. Twice they stopped to get a better look at it. On the second occasion Barney had left the car, looked into the object, and seen "many figures scurrying about as though they were making some hurried type of preparation. One figure was observing us from the windows. From the distance this was seen, the figures appeared to be about the size of a pencil, and seemed to be dressed in some type of shiny black uniform." Frightened, Barney Hill ran back to the car. Strange "beeping or buzzing sounds . . . seemed to be striking the trunk of our car" as it accelerated. "We did not observe this object leaving . . . [A]bout thirty miles further south we were again bombarded by these same beeping sounds." She further wrote:

At this time we are searching for any clue that might be helpful to my husband, in recalling whatever it was he saw that caused him to panic. His mind has completely blacked out at this point. Every attempt to recall, leaves him very frightened. We are considering the possibility of a competent [sic] psychiatrist who uses hypnosis.

**The first story.** Walter N. Webb, a Boston astronomer and UFO investigator, first heard of the case on October 19, when NICAP alerted him to it. Webb called on the Hills two days later and conducted the first of a series of interviews.

Barney, 39, and Betty Hill, 41, an interracial couple, were active in the area civil-rights movement. Barney, a dispatcher at the Boston post office, served on the advisory board of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission and on the board of directors of the Rockingham County Poverty Program. Betty worked days as a social worker for the state of New Hampshire and devoted her evenings to volunteer labor for the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. They were also devoted members of the Unitarian-Universalist Church in Portsmouth. The Hills, in short, were solid citizens.

They told Webb that on the evening of September 19, the couple were driving home from a trip to Quebec, going south on U.S. Highway 3. Near Groveton, New Hampshire, they noticed a bright light below and to the left of the moon and above Jupiter in the clear southwestern sky. The light headed west, then north, at one point crossing the face of the moon. Barney thought it might be a satellite or an airplane, but Betty, recalling her sister's UFO sighting four years earlier, thought it might be something more interesting. The object curved westward, then eastward in their direction. Since their car was alone on the highway, the Hills wondered uneasily if the craft was interested in them. Barney stopped the car and retrieved a .22 pistol from the trunk.

They were now in a forested, uninhabited area. Betty was watching the object, still off to their right, through binoculars. It was closer and lower, and Betty could see a band of lights running along the edge of a disc-shaped structure, with a red light on either side of it. The object was moving in a steplike pattern, tilting vertically as it initiated each "step," spinning all the while. At various times Barney looked through the binoculars as well. Reluctant to abandon his plane hypothesis, he was nonetheless puzzled that he could make out a fuselage but not wings. And try as he might, he could hear no sound.

Driving at no more than five mph as they monitored the object's movements, they entered the Franconia Notch in the White Mountains. They stopped again and watched the object pass behind the top of Cannon Mountain (4077 feet elevation) a mile away. They caught occasional glimpses of it as it moved past other mountaintops. When they resumed the drive, the object reappeared and resumed its position to their west. It was traveling parallel to them, low enough so that it was sometimes lost behind the trees. By now there was no doubt about its shape. It was a flattened, circular disc, the apparent size of a four-engine aircraft.

Two miles north of North Woodstock, the object descended on a clearing to their immediate right, then hovered less than 100 feet in the air and a few hundred feet away. A blue-white fluorescent glow shined through a row of windows along the side.



Barney stopped the car and slipped the pistol into his coat. He got out and turned the binoculars on the craft. The object crossed the road 100 feet in front of them and stopped above a field to their left.

Barney began to walk toward the object, stopping at intervals to bring the binoculars to his face. The object resumed its slow descent. Now he could see a number of humanlike figures, perhaps as many as 11, inside the windows. They were watching him. They stood in a corridor that encircled the craft at its center. Abruptly all but one of them started to scurry about, turning their backs and appearing to pull levers on the wall. The red lights on either side of the craft moved outward, and Barney saw for the first time that they were attached to the tips of two pointed fins sliding out from the sides.

The object moved closer to Barney, filling the entire field of view through the binoculars. The intense stare of the "leader," or so Barney thought of him, was profoundly unnerving. The figure appeared determined to do something, and Barney suspected it was to capture him "like a bug in a net." The figures could now easily be seen without the glasses. The UFO was about 75 feet from him.

Overcome, Barney turned and ran. From the car Betty could hear him screaming, "They're going to capture us!" He jumped inside and tore off down the highway. Barney told Betty to look above them to see if the object had swung above them. Betty rolled down the window and gazed upward. There was nothing but blackness. Barney was sure the object was blocking out the stars, which were visible through the back window. Suddenly an irregular beeping sounded, loud enough to shake the car and seeming to emanate from the rear. The Hills then experienced a tingling sensation in their bodies and a feeling of drowsiness.

Sometime later, passing through Plymouth, the couple became conscious of a second series of beeps. They were inside the car, and Barney was driving, but they sat numb and passive. When the beeps faded, Betty said, "Now do you believe in flying saucers?" Barney snapped, "Don't be ridiculous." They were not sure where they were until they saw a sign indicating that Ashland—35 miles south of Indian Head, where they had heard the first beeps—was close by.

They turned off on U.S. 93, and only after driving it a few miles did the couple emerge from their semi-sleep state. They exited on Route 4 and headed for Portsmouth, which they reached just as dawn was breaking. Once home Betty, for reasons she did not understand, asked Barney to put the luggage in the back hall instead of the main part of the house. She and Barney both felt strangely clammy and unclean. Barney went to the car, and as he was gathering their suitcases, he noticed that the leather binocular strap, which he had had around his neck just hours ago, had broken. Furthermore, something about his lower abdomen so bothered him that he stepped into the bathroom and examined his genitals with a mirror.

Betty could not understand how a pink, powdery substance got on her dress. She threw the dress into a wastebasket, then thought better of it and retrieved it.



She placed it on a clothesline, and soon the pink material blew away, though it left some stains.

The couple tried to reconstruct what had happened after they left Indian Head, but memories were faint. They vaguely recalled a luminous moon shape sitting on the road. Barney had the impression that for some reason he had said to his wife, "Oh, no, not again." Betty thought Barney had taken a sharp left turn off Route 3.

Later, after the couple had caught several hours' sleep, Betty packed up the dress and shoes she had worn that night. She placed them in the back of the closet and never wore them again. Her action reflected a fear that she had been exposed to radiation.

The day after the sighting, Betty phoned Pease Air Force Base, and she and her husband discussed their experience, omitting some of their fantastic details

## HILL ABDUCTION CASE

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Betty and Barney Hill's encounter with a UFO introduced a new aspect of the UFO phenomenon: the abduction. (Fortean Picture Library)



(such as the figures) out of fear of being thought crazy. The next day Maj. Paul W. Henderson of Pease's 100th Bomb Wing called back with a few questions. His report on the Hills's sighting was forwarded to **Project Blue Book** at Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton, Ohio. Henderson reached no conclusions, and his telephone conversations with the couple comprised the whole of the Air Force investigation. On September 27, 1963, Blue Book released this statement:

The Barney Hill sighting was investigated by officials from Pease AFB. The case is carried as insufficient data in the Air Force Files. No direction (azimuth) was reported and there are inconsistencies in the report. The sighting occurred about midnight and the object was observed for at least one hour. No specific details on maneuverability were given. The planet Jupiter was in the South West, at about 20 degrees elevation[,] and would have set at the approximate time that the object disappeared. Without positional data the case could not be evaluated as Jupiter. There was a strong [temperature] inversion in the area. The actual light source is not known. As no lateral or vertical movement was noted, the object was in all probability Jupiter. No evidence was presented to indicate that the object was due to other than natural causes.

**Series of dreams.** Unable to get the incident out of her mind, Betty took out some UFO books from the Portsmouth library and then wrote Keyhoe. When Webb conducted a six-hour interview with the couple on October 21, he found that their apparent amnesia concerning some parts of the episode had deeply unsettled them. Betty also reported that one and a half to two weeks after the UFO incident, she had six straight nights' worth of extremely vivid nightmares, unlike any she had ever experienced before. They were so lifelike that she could not stop thinking about them even during the day.

By the time the Hill case had run its course, investigators would see these sorts of details—missing time, fragmented memories, inexplicable anxieties and obsessions—as symptomatic of an abduction experience. But nothing like the modern **abduction phenomenon** was known or even suspected in 1961. Thus Webb cannot be blamed for dismissing as irrelevant what would turn out to be crucial clues to the case's hidden dimension and most dramatic aspect. In his October 26 report to NICAP, Webb wrote:

In his conversation with me (and with his wife since the sighting) a mental block occurred when he mentioned the "leader" peering out the window at him. Mr. Hill believes he saw something he doesn't want to remember. He claimed he was not close enough to see any facial characteristics on the figures, although at another time he referred to one of them looking over his shoulder and grinning and to the leader's expressionless face. However, it is my view that the observer's blackout is not of any great significance. I think the whole experience was so improbable and fantastic to witness—along with the very real fear of

being captured adding to imagined fears—that his mind finally refused to believe what his eyes were perceiving and a mental block resulted.

In November Betty recorded her still sharp memories of her dreams, which were remarkable indeed. They were also terrifying, she wrote, “greater than I had ever believed possible.”

Betty dreamed that she was struggling to regain consciousness. Finally able to open her eyes (in the dream), she saw herself on a path in the woods. On either side of her was a man. Two men were in front of her, two men behind her. Men also surrounded Barney. In a dazed state—he looked as if he were sleepwalking—he did not respond when Betty called his name, and Betty did not respond when the man to her left asked if Barney was his name. The man reassured her that she had nothing to fear. She and Barney would be given some tests, then released. The man spoke English clearly, though in a foreign accent. His companions were silent.

The strange figures were slightly over five feet tall, with oversized chests and noses, black hair, and dark eyes. Their skin was gray. They wore uniforms consisting of trousers, short jackets, slip-on shoes or boots, and caps vaguely similar to those worn by the Air Force.

Barney and Betty were led to a metallic disc-shaped structure “almost as wide as my house is long,” Betty noted. They stepped onto a ramp that led to the rear of the craft, and they entered through a door and walked along a corridor that followed the curvature of the ship.

As she and the leader went into the first room along the corridor, she was alarmed when she saw that Barney was being led farther on. Why could she not be examined in the same room with her husband? The leader replied in an exasperated tone that it would take twice as long that way. Then four or five men briefly came into the room, only to leave when yet another man, who would do the examining, stepped inside. In a pleasant, reassuring tone he asked Betty a number of questions. Though he spoke in English, the doctor, as Betty would think of him, had an imperfect command of the language, and she could not always understand him. At the same time he did not always understand her answers. For example, he shook his head when she answered his inquiry about her and Barney’s ages. When she talked about the foods human beings eat, he seemed confused.

He then said he wished to perform a few simple, painless tests. They would determine the differences between his people and human beings. The leader then returned to the room and watched as Betty was sat on a stool with a bright light shining down on her. The doctor cut off a hair sample from the left rear of her head. He studied her mouth, throat, ears, hands, and fingernails, taking a piece of the last. Next he looked at her feet. Then he ran a slender, letter-opener-shaped instrument along her arms and handed the scrapings to the leader, who placed them on glass slides.



Betty was then asked to lie on an examination table. The doctor pulled a machine over. It looked, Betty thought, like "the wires of an EEG, but no tracing machine was seen." He explained that he wanted to check her nervous system. He touched various parts of her anatomy with the needles. Her dress was removed because it was getting in the way. Next the doctor produced a needle, four to six inches long, and announced that he was going to conduct a pregnancy test. When he thrust it into her navel, Betty writhed in agony. The leader waved his hand in front of her eyes, and the pain instantly disappeared.

The testing completed, the doctor left as the leader gathered up the samples and placed them in a drawer. He said the doctor had gone off to finish testing Barney. Soon the couple would be allowed to return to the car.

In the time that remained, Betty conversed with the leader. The exchange was interrupted, however, when a number of crew members rushed into the room. They talked with the leader in a language unknown to Betty, and he and they left. On returning shortly thereafter, the leader opened Betty's mouth and acted as if he were trying to pull her teeth out. When that didn't work, he asked why Barney's teeth were removable and hers weren't. The doctor then appeared, and he, too, looked at her teeth. Betty laughingly explained that Barney had dentures because human beings lose their teeth as they get older.

After the others departed, the leader and Betty resumed their conversation. He wanted to know what she meant by "old age." She explained human mortality to him and mentioned that at least theoretically an individual person could live 100 years. The leader asked what 100 years was. Betty could not get him to understand the concept.

She asked if she could bring back something to validate her fantastic experience. The leader agreed, and Betty picked up a large book. Inside were symbols written in long, narrow columns. The book, Betty declared, would be her proof even if she could not read what it said. Then, according to Betty:

I asked where he was from and he asked if I knew anything about the universe. I said no but I would like to learn. He went over to the wall and pulled down a map, strange to me. Now I would believe this to be [a] sky map. It was a map of the heavens, with numerous size [sic] stars and planets, some large, some only pinpoints. Between many of these, lines were drawn, some broken lines, some light solid lines, some heavy black lines. They were not straight, but curved. Some went from one planet to another, to another, in a series of lines. Others had no lines, and he said the lines were expeditions. He asked me where the earth was on this map, and I admitted that I had no idea. He became slight [sic] sarcastic and said that if I did not know where the earth was, it was impossible to show me where he was from; he snapped the map back in place. I said that I did not intend to anger him but had told him that I knew nothing of such things. But there were many people

here who had knowledge of these things, and I knew that they would love to talk with him, and would understand him. Then I suggested the possibility of arranging a meeting between him and these people, that this would be a monumental meeting; a quiet meeting with scientists, or top people in the world. While I was saying these things, I was wondering if I could do this, but felt that it could be worked out some way. He asked why, and I said that most people did not believe that he existed; he would have a chance to meet us and to study us openly. He smiled and said nothing. I was in the middle of trying to sell him this idea, when several men appeared with Barney, who was still in a daze. I spoke to him and he did not answer. I asked when he would be fully awake and the leader said as soon as we were back in the car.

As they were going out the door, a crew member said something, and an excited exchange ensued. The leader and the crew apparently were arguing, and the leader represented the minority position. He broke from the group and took the book from Betty in spite of her protests. This was her only proof, she said. The leader replied that this was precisely the reason they did not want her to have it. He said he had no personal objection to her keeping the book, but he had been overruled; in fact, she would be prevented from even remembering the experience. Deeply upset, Betty swore that one day she would remember it, and there was nothing he could do about it. The leader agreed that maybe she would remember, but his orders were to do everything to keep her from doing so. In any event, he went on, nobody would believe her. Barney would never remember and would dispute her recollections so that the entire affair would always be clouded in doubt. For her own good it would be best if she forgot.

As they were led from the ship and through the woods, Betty kept saying that she *would* remember. Betty thanked the leader for the meeting and his kindness.

We came to the car, and the leader suggested that we wait and see them leave. We agreed. Barney seemed to wake up as we approached the car, and he showed no emotion as tho [sic] this was an everyday occurrence. We stood on the right hand side of the car. Barney was leaning against the front fender, and I was by the door. As we were waiting, I thought of Delsey. I opened the car door and Delsey was under the front seat. She was trembling badly and I patted her for a moment. She came out and I picked her up, and held her, again leaning against the car door.

Suddenly the ship became a bright glowing object, and it appeared to roll like a ball turning over about 3-4 times and then sailing into the sky. In a moment it was gone. . . .

Betty exuberantly declared that this was the most wonderful experience of her life. Barney said nothing. They got into the car, and Barney drove off. "Now do you believe in flying saucers?" Betty asked. "Don't be ridiculous," Barney snapped.



**Missing time, unanswered questions.** On November 25 two NICAP members, C. D. Jackson and Robert E. Hohman, visited the Hills and interviewed them at length. Jackson and Hohman, who had read Webb's report, had many questions. One concerned the length of time the trip had taken. It should not have taken nearly so long as it did, the investigators remarked. The question shocked Barney and Betty, who realized for the first time that the trip from Colebrook to Portsmouth should have taken less than four hours; yet they had not gotten home until seven hours later. "Even if I allowed more time than I know we took at those roadside stops," Barney told writer John G. Fuller, "there still were at least two hours missing out of that night's trip."

Betty searched her memory and got stuck on the vague, odd image of the moon on the ground. How could she have thought that, and where did she get the idea? She did not know, and Jackson and Hohman told her she could not have seen the moon, since it had set earlier in the evening. Maybe, they went on, the "moon" was something else.

For all their efforts the Hills could recall almost nothing of the 35 miles between Indian Head and Ashland. Apparently they both had suffered amnesia. The subject of hypnosis came up. Perhaps hypnosis could unlock the missing memories. Barney was apprehensive about hypnosis, but it "might clear up Betty and her nonsense about her dreams," he said.

Meanwhile, starting in February 1962, the Hills began making regular trips searching without success for the encounter site. They hoped that exposure to the setting of the sighting would trigger memories. Despite numerous trips nothing happened. (They would not locate the site until September 1965, and then it would be by accident.) In March they learned of Patrick J. Quirke, a psychiatrist who served as medical director of the Baldpate Sanitarium in Georgetown, Massachusetts. They made an appointment with Dr. Quirke. Quirke said he doubted that they had experienced a collective hallucination. He discouraged them from trying hypnosis; better to let the memories return naturally, he suggested.

In February or March warts appeared in a near-perfect circle around Barney's groin. They were removed surgically. Meanwhile other stresses, which Barney thought were unrelated to the UFO experience, plagued him. In the summer Barney visited a second psychiatrist, Duncan Stephens of Exeter, New Hampshire, and commenced therapy. Over the months Barney discussed many things, among them his UFO experience. Like Quirke before him, Dr. Stephens rejected the notion that the Hills had hallucinated simultaneously.

The Hills discussed their UFO sighting at a church gathering on March 3, 1963. It was the first time they had talked about the event in a public forum. The second would be a less formal presentation at a UFO study group in Quincy Center, Massachusetts, the following November 3, and that evening would prove crucial to the resolution of the case (or to its deeper mystification). Another speaker at the gathering, Capt. Ben Swett of Pease AFB, was intrigued by the missing-time aspect

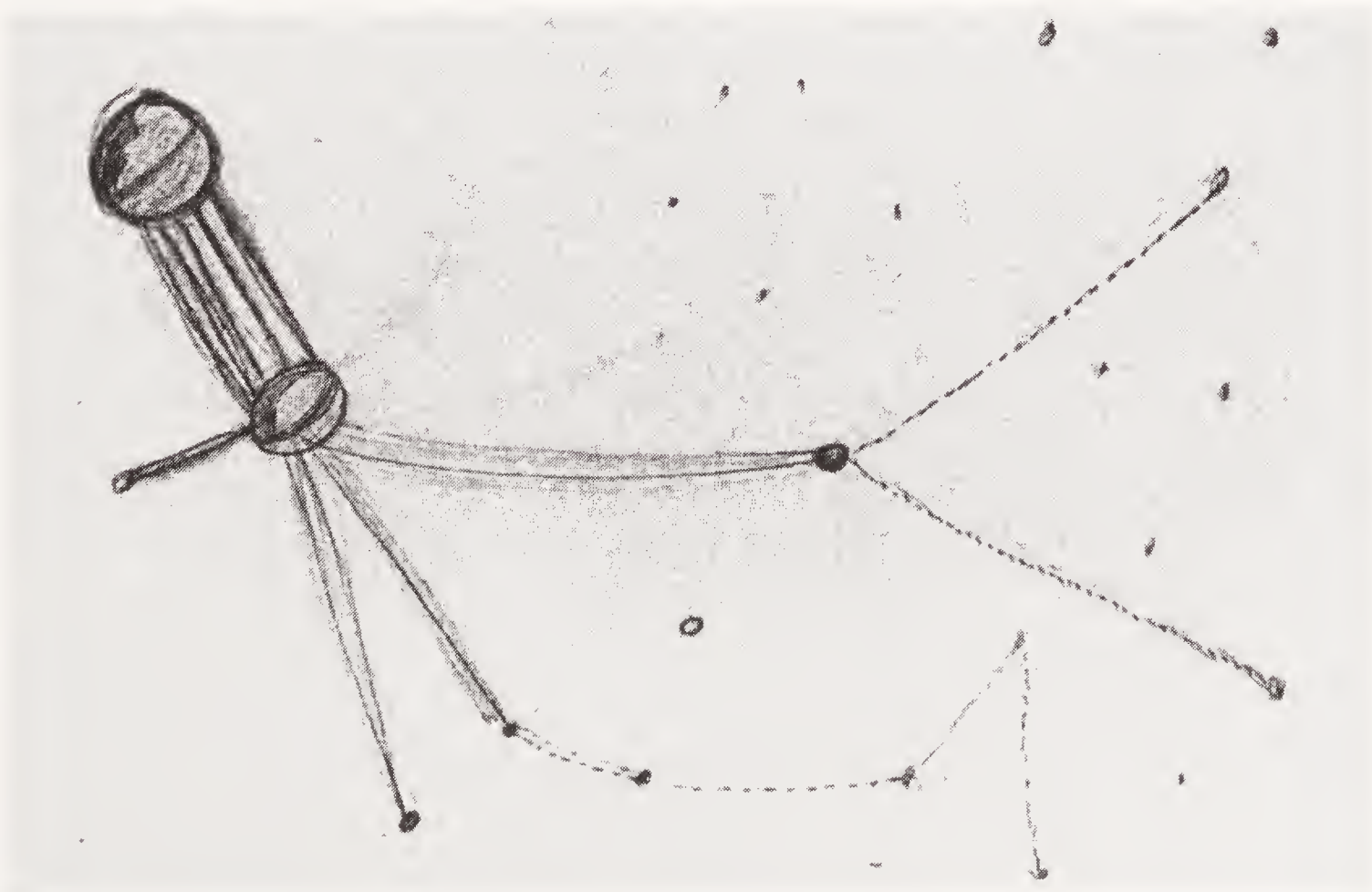
of the story. When the Hills told him of earlier suggestions that they try hypnosis, Swett, himself a practicing hypnotist, said he thought that was an excellent idea.

So Barney brought it up to Dr. Stephens at their next session, and Stephens in turn contacted Benjamin Simon, a well-known Boston psychiatrist who had long employed hypnosis in his practice. An appointment was set up, and the Hills showed up at Dr. Simon's office on December 14.

Simon concluded early on that the UFO experience had more to do with Barney's problems than Barney was willing to acknowledge. This diagnosis had nothing to do with the psychiatrist's feelings about UFOs. A committed skeptic, he rejected the notion that UFOs could be extraterrestrial spacecraft. As Webb would write, "He proved to be so skeptical of the spaceship hypothesis that he refused to read the literature and sighting reports I made available to him on the subject." Nonetheless, it was clear to Simon that the Hills *believed* they had seen a UFO. Simon did not doubt that they had seen something, probably an earthly experimental aircraft, and this had set in motion an anxiety-provoking psychological experience whose sources it might be possible to uncover through hypnosis.

**Revelations under hypnosis.** Over the next six months, beginning on January 4 and ending on June 6, 1964, the Hills made periodic trips to Boston and Simon's office.

Barney was the first to undergo hypnosis. The sessions took place out of Betty's hearing, and after the sessions Barney was instructed not to remember what he had said. Betty underwent her first hypnosis on March 7. The experience was an emotional one for both of them. Barney in particular experienced intense fright; his



Betty Hill drew this star map based on her memory of what she saw aboard a UFO. One analysis suggests that the map indicates the craft came from the Zeta Reticuli system. (Fortean Picture Library)



testimony was punctuated with screams and sobs. As in his conscious recall of the event, in his present-tense recounting he firmly resisted the UFO identification; under hypnosis events forced him to confront an unimaginable alien presence—which he again rejected as soon as the amnesia set in.

The experience Betty related under hypnosis was essentially the one she had previewed in her 1961 dreams, except that this time the aliens had neither hair nor big noses. Barney's account was sketchier, perhaps because by both his testimony and Betty's he kept his eyes closed during much of the encounter. Barney reported that the leather strap holding the binoculars had broken as he ran from the field where he had been watching the hovering UFO. He spoke of driving off Route 3, guided there against his will. The same "mind voice" instructed him to take yet one more detour, this one taking him into a deep woods. After driving some distance, Barney spotted six men standing in the road. A bright orange glow illuminated the road, but he could not see its source. The figures, dressed alike in dark clothing, waved him to stop. Three approached the car and told him not to be afraid. Their words, while soothing, did not alleviate all of his fear. The leader told him to close his eyes. With this instruction Barney had a peculiar impression: "I felt like the eyes had pushed into my eyes."

The men helped Barney out of the car. He felt weak and had to be assisted; two of the men positioned themselves on either side of him. He could feel his shoes dragging along the ground.

His eyes still closed, he was walked up a ramp, and he stumbled over the bulkhead. Once inside he felt himself going down a corridor and entering a room. He opened his eyes to see three men and a blue, spotlessly clean, wedge-shaped "operating room." He saw a table and knew he was to lie on it. He rested there on his back, his feet hanging over the edge. He closed his eyes again. Soon thereafter he sensed his shoes being removed. A cup was placed over his groin. Barney believed it was used to extract a semen sample from him. One of the men scraped his left arm and looked into his ears and throat. Barney thought he heard other men coming in to the room. After rolling him over, the examiner inserted a cylindrical device up Barney's rectum. He could feel someone counting his vertebrae.

Eventually Barney's shoes were put back on. He got down from the table and was guided out the door and down the ramp. He walked for a short distance before he opened his eyes. The car was not far away. He was surprised to see its lights out because he remembered leaving them on. He looked over his shoulder and saw Betty coming out of the woods. He had no idea what either was doing there.

Their dachshund Delsey was cowering under the seat. Barney got into the car and sat on his pistol. Betty tried to persuade him to get out and watch "it" leave, but he did not know what "it" was supposed to represent.

Suddenly there was a glow in the middle of the road. As they stared at it, it got brighter. "Oh, no, not again," Barney groaned. Betty said it must be the

moon. As already noted, it could not have been, and apparently the Hills did not really believe it even at the time. This aspect of the experience, however, would never be clarified. At some point soon thereafter, they drove the 20 miles it took them to get back to Route 3. There they heard the beeping sounds again.

Their onboard experience had taken some 30 to 40 minutes, they would estimate, after Simon brought their accounts into consciousness through posthypnotic suggestion and then exposure to the 11 hours of taped testimony. (Later, however, they would revise that figure to two hours.) Though Betty's "memories" were fuller and richer than Barney's, their accounts were consistent with each other in nearly all particulars. There were, however, a few small differences, mostly related to the appearances of the crew members. Betty saw caps on all of the crew, whereas Barney remembered that only the leader wore a cap. (Curiously, in his conscious, post-sighting account of what he had seen while looking up at the crew from his position on the field, he told Webb all the crew wore caps.) The leader also wore a black scarf over his shoulder.

They agreed that the beings were small, perhaps slightly over five feet tall, and had oddly shaped heads with broad foreheads. Their skin was grayish, and their eyes were large (in Barney's recall large enough to extend to the side of the head). They spoke to each other with a humming or mumbling sound, but Barney was sure that the relatively few messages he received were by thought transference. (He did not know the term "mental telepathy" until Simon explained it to him.) Betty at first thought that the leader and the examiner were speaking English to her but on subsequent reflection decided that she was "hearing" them inside her head.

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Simon tried to persuade Barney that the abduction was a fantasy inspired by Betty's dreams. Though earlier he had resisted the idea of a UFO experience, Barney was not buying Simon's theory. For one thing, he pointed out, there were aspects of his testimony unique to him. For example, he said, "She did not tell me about being stopped by the men. She did not have this in her dreams." As for the idea that the abduction was just a hallucination, Barney remarked, "I wish I could think it was." The memories, if that is what they were, seemed too real, as real as any recollection of past experiences whose authenticity was not open to question.

Still, Simon, who considered the extraterrestrial-abduction explanation "supernatural" and therefore not worth consideration, stuck by his contamination-by-dreams hypothesis, which would become the standard alternative explanation for the Hill experience. He later published a short piece on the case, treating it as a psychological aberration, in a psychiatric journal.

However they might disagree about the nature of the experience, the Hills and Simon agreed that the therapy had been successful. The stress and anxiety that had plagued them since that night in September 1961 were gone.

**Celebrity and beyond.** Life returned to normal for Barney and Betty. The couple continued to discuss their UFO experience with family, friends, and the investiga-



tors they had met earlier, but they had no desire to go public with a story they were certain few would believe. Then on the afternoon of October 25, 1965, the Hills and their story suddenly became known to the world.

Barney had completed his mail route and had just stepped into the post office when someone showed him a front-page article in the *Boston Traveler*. The headline read: "A UFO Chiller: Did THEY Seize Couple?" Reporter John H. Luttrell had been given a tape of remarks the Hills had given the Quincy UFO group in September 1962, during which Betty had talked about her dreams and her suspicion that she and Barney really had been captured by UFO beings. From other sources Luttrell learned that they had undergone hypnosis with Dr. Simon. He gained access to a tape of an interview they had given investigators after they had completed the therapy. The two tapes, not a direct interview (which the Hills had refused), provided the basis for the story. United Press International picked it up the same day. Like it or not, the Hills had become UFO celebrities.

In 1966 author and *Saturday Review* columnist John G. Fuller enlisted their and Simon's cooperation and wrote the bestselling *The Interrupted Journey*. Eventually the book would be turned into an NBC made-for-television movie, *The UFO Incident*, starring James Earl Jones and Estelle Parsons. It aired on October 20, 1975.

Barney died suddenly of a cerebral hemorrhage on February 25, 1969, at age 46. A friendly, outgoing woman, Betty in time settled comfortably into her new life as a near-household name. She became intensely interested in UFOs, spoke at gatherings of all kinds about her and Barney's experience, and—most controversially—started reporting numerous sightings at what she called a "landing area."

A dispute also raged about whether or not radar at Pease AFB had tracked a UFO late on the night of the abduction. In the opening installment of his *Traveler* series, Luttrell wrote, "Although conceding that other persons reported sighting a UFO at the same time and place as the Hills, the Air Force says the UFO appeared on its radar as a 'shimmering'—an air mass phenomena [sic] that reflects light from the ground." In later statements and public appearances Betty would cite the radar tracking as evidence of the reality of her and Barney's experience.

When investigator John Paul Oswald managed to secure copies of the relevant Air Force records, he learned that an unidentified target had been tracked in the sky just above Pease's landing-approach area. There was no corresponding visual sighting. If this was indeed a UFO, it was to the south of the Hills's location and so presumably was not the same object.

**The star map.** In 1968 an Oak Harbor, Ohio, third-grade teacher and amateur astronomer, Marjorie E. Fish, became so intrigued by the star map Betty allegedly saw aboard the UFO that she resolved to decipher it. If she could figure out which stars were on the map, perhaps she could determine where the spacecraft came from.

Though Dr. Simon had urged Betty to draw the map, she had been reluctant to do so because she felt she could not draw well enough to render an accurate rep-

resentation. So he gave her a posthypnotic suggestion that she should sketch it when she felt ready, and not long afterwards she drew 12 connected stars and a number of independent ones. The unbroken lines represented trade routes, broken ones expeditionary routes. The map was reproduced in *The Interrupted Journey*.

Fish had few clues to go on but assumed that our sun was one of the 12 stars. Eventually, with much difficulty, she created a three-dimensional map (Betty described the map she had seen as like a holograph, three-dimensional in other words) using the sunlike stars within 54 light years of the earth. A pattern emerged strikingly like the one Betty had drawn. The sun turned out to be on the “occasional visit” route. In Fish’s analysis the points of origin—the two most prominent stars on the map—were Zeta 1 Reticuli and Zeta 2 Reticuli, a pair of stars only light weeks’ distance from each other yet far enough apart so that stable planetary conditions could evolve.

Walter Webb endorsed Fish’s conclusions. In the December issue of *Astronomy*, editor Terence Dickinson, heretofore a nonparticipant in UFO debates, wrote an open-minded article and solicited comments from scientists who confessed that they were intrigued. Virtually every issue of the magazine the next year carried letters debating the pros and cons of the map. The most celebrated participant was Cornell University astronomer Carl Sagan, who with associate Steven Soter argued that the apparent pattern was in fact the product of chance. Proponents weighed in with counterarguments.

The issue resurfaced several years later in *Fate*, when Allan Hendry noted a claim by a French astronomer that recent observations had proven Zeta 2 Reticuli to be a binary (twin) star system. Fish had specifically eliminated all binary stars from consideration, on the grounds that the unstable orbits of any planets orbiting them are unlikely to sustain life over the billions of years it would take for intelligent civilizations to evolve. At the time Fish was reconstructing the map, astronomers believed Zeta 2 Reticuli to be a single star. Hendry wrote:

Remove Zeta 2 Reticuli from the group and the entire interpretation fails. What if one contrives to include sunlike binaries *ex post facto*? Fish herself acknowledged that she had omitted other sunlike double stars in that volume of space. To reintroduce them would totally disrupt the pattern. Without its special qualities (the absence of binaries, the use of all sunlike stars and so on) the Fish interpretation becomes no more valid than its rivals. Without a strong interpretation to give it meaning, Betty Hill’s star map becomes what it was in the first place: an anecdotal curiosity.

Subsequent observation, however, determined that Zeta 2 Reticuli is not a binary system, and the astronomer who originally made the claim withdrew it.

**Theories.** When the abduction part of the Hill story came to light, not all ufologists rushed to embrace it. For example, NICAP—which had been willing to accept



the idea that the couple could have seen UFO occupants from a distance—told Luttrell that the abduction was “highly questionable,” no doubt a fantasy concocted under hypnosis.

On the other hand Webb, NICAP’s own investigator, was more open to the possibility. In a long summary of the case he prepared for the organization in 1965, Webb made these observations:

It is intriguing to this investigator that under hypnosis these gaps were filled in very nicely, like pieces of a puzzle, and both witnesses largely corroborated each other’s accounts. . . . Barney Hill was able to uncover the cause of his block: the leader’s eyes and a “voice” that instructed him to come closer. . . . As he obeyed, a ladder began to come down from the UFO. When Barney dropped his binoculars, the strap holding them around his neck broke. Prior to hypnosis, Barney could not remember how or where he had broken the strap. . . .

The end of the first encounter (consciously recalled) flowed smoothly into the beginning of the second encounter . . . and the end of the second encounter flowed into that portion of the trip where the witnesses were once again consciously aware. . . .

If we are indeed dealing with an actual abduction of earthlings by UFO entities and not with imagined events, it is clear that the Hills were *made* to forget parts of the experience by the imposition of hypnotic blocks on their minds. If Barney Hill made no effort to block this imposed amnesia, he would probably not recall the events or at least have great difficulty in recalling them. Similarly, according to this speculation, Betty Hill, in her account, attempted to fight this control and therefore might have recalled the abduction in her dreams. When Barney “recalled” the abduction under hypnoanalysis, he was told by the “voice” to keep his eyes closed and thus his description would not be expected to be as thorough as his wife’s. The mysterious “beeps” appear to have had some significance in the controls exerted on the Hills.

Mr. Hill’s inspection of his genitals after the sighting (for unconscious reasons) and the wart-like growths that developed later around the same area could have been, in this case, symptomatic of a real experience—the cup-like device placed at that spot on his body. At that time, prior to hypnoanalysis, only the witness’s unconscious mind would be aware of the experience.

Also consistent with the hypothesis of a real abduction is such suggestive physical evidence as the scuff marks on the tops of Barney’s shoes and the pink substance on Betty’s dress (though analysis of the pink substance yielded no substantive results). Their psychological stress and confusion were immediate, profound, and far in excess of what one would associate even with a close-proximity

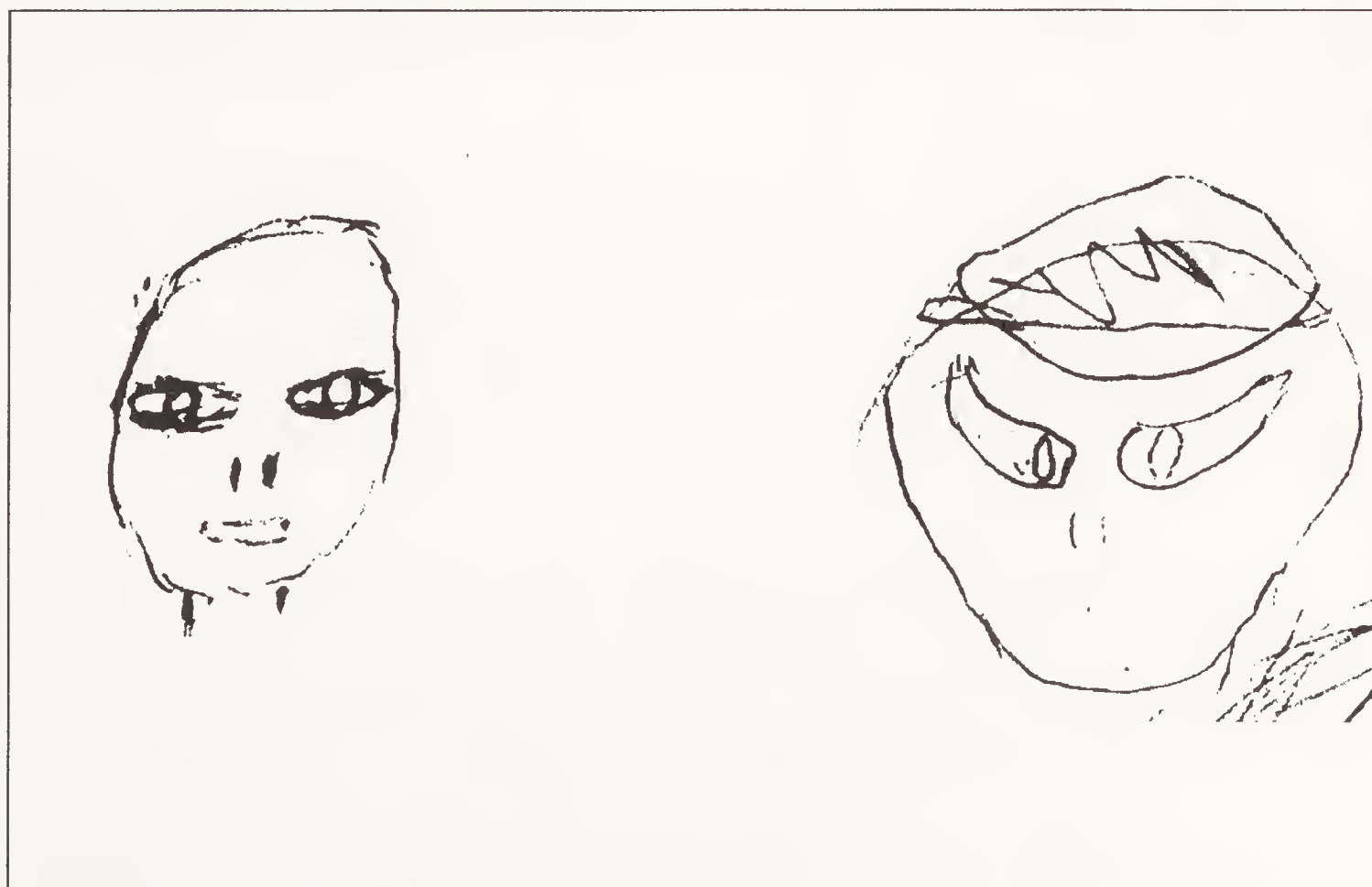
sighting, but which would become familiar to investigators as the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder manifested among the growing population of abductees.

As noted earlier, nothing like the Hill abduction story was known in the early 1960s. Moreover, Betty's dreams occurred within days of the incident, weeks before she had any contact with any ufologist. Yet even after over two years of interactions with UFO investigators (from October 1961 to June 1964), the story she told under hypnosis differed only in a few details about the aliens' facial features from the one she experienced in her dreams. Thus an allegation made in the debunking literature, that ufologists "influenced" the content of the narrative, is simply baseless; nor could that influence have come from Betty's limited reading of the UFO literature, since nothing in that literature had anything to say about missing time, physical examinations, the pacification effect, rectal probes, semen samples, or other then-unknown (though destined to be familiar) elements of the abduction experience.

All debunking treatments of the Hill case endorse Simon's theory that Barney incorporated his wife's dreams into an abduction fantasy. All neglect to mention Simon's antipathy to the UFO subject. Simon reasoned implicitly that since UFOs do not exist, they cannot kidnap people; thus any other explanation, whatever its inadequacies, would have to do. It was not as if, in other words, he had carefully reflected on the UFO hypothesis, weighed its merits and defects, and at last found it wanting. It simply never entered into his thinking. Thus Simon's will-

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Barney Hill's depictions, the first drawn from memory, the second while under hypnosis, of the UFO leader who abducted him and his wife. (Fortean Picture Library)



ingness to embrace a theory that did not begin to account for the trauma the normally unflappable Barney experienced *immediately*—a week and a half before Betty even started to have her dreams or had a chance to tell him about them. That trauma still plagued Barney when he visited Simon well over two years later. Even Simon recognized the connection between Barney's stress and the incident in the White Mountains. Yet Simon could only feebly speculate that Barney had been frightened by an experimental aircraft—one whose existence has yet to be documented even now.

At least this identification of the object, unconvincing though it is, is more plausible than the alternative proposed by debunkers Philip J. Klass and Robert Sheaffer: that the Hills's terror and trauma stemmed from a sighting of the planet Jupiter—presumably, we are to suppose, piloted by humanoids who succeeded in flying their planet across the face of the moon.

A persistent myth permeates portrayals of the Hill case in the debunking literature: that Barney, unlike Betty, said the beings had no mouths. Apparently this notion is based on a remark Barney made to Simon, after the hypnosis had ended, that "I just can't remember any mouth." Quoted out of context, the sentence creates a misleading impression. In fact Barney was discussing his observation of the occupants from the ground, when his attention was focused on the leader's eyes and his mentally communicated message, "Just keep *looking*—and stay there." Earlier, however, under hypnosis Barney did express an awareness of a mouth when, speaking of the leader, he said, "his lips are not moving." For lips not to move, of course, they have to be there. He would also describe the mouths this way: they looked "much like when you draw one horizontal line, with a short perpendicular line on each end. The horizontal line would represent the lips without the muscle that we have." Barney's sketch of the beings, drawn as he entered a trancelike state while listening to a tape recording of his account of the encounter, shows a slit-like mouth with no apparent muscles.

Another unconvincing argument stresses what is supposed to be a telltale contradiction into the discussion, of the sort that should have alerted any attentive reader to the dreamlike nature of her alleged experience. Whereas early in the account, according to Klass and other critics, the aliens had no concept of time, later—just as Betty was about to leave with the book—the leader said, "Wait a minute." How, critics asked, could someone who knew nothing of time know about a minute?

This objection betrays an unnecessary literal-mindedness. It is reasonable to speculate that Betty was interpreting a telepathic, not a spoken, message, the sense of which she may have been "translating" into colloquial English words the alien was not actually "speaking." The mental impression perhaps could have been "translated" just as easily into something like "stop."

The debunkers, one cannot help noting, miss a larger and more troubling problem. It is *extremely* difficult to believe that a technologically sophisticated

spacefaring civilization would not have a sense of time. On the other hand, Karl T. Pflock, an authority on the Hill case, suggests that “it’s entirely reasonable to conclude ‘the Leader’ was confused by the term year. He didn’t know what it stood for, and Betty didn’t know how to explain it.”

Another attempt to explain away the Hill encounter has been proposed by skeptic Martin Kottmeyer. Twelve days before Barney underwent hypnosis on February 22, 1964, an episode of the science-fiction television show *Outer Limits* featured an alien with wrap-around eyes. The alien is given these words of dialogue: “In all the universes, in all the unities beyond all the universes, all who have eyes have eyes that speak.” Under hypnosis Barney says at one point, as he encounters the beings on the road, “Only the eyes are talking to me.” Kottmeyer, who finds this significant, further observes that Barney said nothing about wrap-around eyes in his earlier conscious testimony.

This is a point, but not much of one. Kottmeyer did not trouble to inquire of Betty Hill, who is still alive, if she and her husband were in the habit of watching *Outer Limits*. (When asked by another writer, Betty said, “As for the *Outer Limits* program—never heard of it. Barney worked nights. If he was not working, we were never home because of our community activities. If we had been home, I am sure this title would not interest us.”) In his conscious memory, dating from that night in September 1961 (long before the airing of the show, in other words), Barney could recall seeing the beings only from a distance, from which perspective the precise shape of the eyes may not have been easily apparent. He did, however, remember vividly the intense stare and the apparent mental message that the beings were about to capture him. The sense of being caught in the stare, and of being the recipient of communication in that state, is consistent with his later testimony.

Under hypnosis Barney says something whose significance would be apparent only many years later. After expressing his fears about the talking eyes, he states, “All I see are these eyes. . . . I’m not even afraid that they’re not connected to a body. They’re just *there*. They’re just up close to me, pressing against my eyes. That’s funny. I’m not afraid.” This aspect of the story was overlooked in virtually all subsequent rehash and analysis of the Hill case, but eventually strikingly similar testimony would emerge in the accounts of other abductees. As the abductees told it, the abductors placed their faces right up against theirs and stared into their eyes. David M. Jacobs quotes these words from a woman under hypnosis:

I’m looking into those eyes. I can’t believe that I’m looking into eyes that big. . . . Once you look into those eyes, you’re gone. You’re just gone. . . . I can’t think of anything but those eyes. It’s like the eyes overwhelm me. How do they do that? It goes inside you, their eyes go inside you. You just are held. You can’t stop looking. If you wanted to, you couldn’t look away. You are drawn into them, and they sort of come into you.



Another investigator, Karla Turner, quotes an abductee who says, "The ETs like to put their noses almost on my nose, and when they do this I just stare into their eyes. Sometimes that's all I ever see, their eyes, and nothing else that's happening."

Even Kottmeyer refrains from contending that such accounts can be traced to a few overlooked sentences among the many Barney spoke during hours of hypnotic testimony. Having exhausted the argument, he retreats into "psychological symbolisms," which he finds meaningful and others may see as evidence of Kottmeyer's reluctance to entertain more heretical and disturbing possibilities.

In any event, Kottmeyer's assertions about wrap-around and speaking eyes do not tell us anything about the nature of the Hills's experience. Instead we are given a small detail, taken out of the much larger context of a complex experience, and asked to think of it as the only issue of consequence, and then, what is more, to dismiss testimony from other persons about this same obscure detail as irrelevant to consideration of its reality status. What is missing in Kottmeyer's argument is a coherent hypothesis, though it is hard to imagine what that hypothesis would be.

The notion that the Hills encountered extraterrestrials and interacted with them aboard a spacecraft is unprovable, of course. The evidence supporting it is circumstantial and anecdotal. Perhaps its principal virtue is that it is the only explanation that is of a piece, that respects the testimony, and that does not assign to the Hills irrational behaviors, lurid delusions, and impaired judgments of the sorts ordinarily associated with grave mental disturbance.

The resolution of the Hill case awaits the resolution of the UFO question itself. If UFOs do not exist, then Barney and Betty did not meet with aliens. If UFOs do exist, they probably did. The evidence available to us from this incident alone provides no answers surer than these.

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UFO hoaxes have a long history. They were being perpetrated long before the terms “flying saucers” and “unidentified flying objects” entered the English language.

**Nineteenth-century tales.** As early as 1864 a French newspaper recounted the discovery, by American scientists, of a fossilized spaceship containing the mummified body of a diminutive alien being. In 1877 an Argentine paper picked up the same story but set it near the Carcarana River in that country. The following year one “A. Seraro, Chemist,” wrote from Peru to report that he had found an extraterrestrial inside an object that looked from the exterior like a stony meteorite.

The first known “UFO” hoax set in North America was chronicled in the March 29, 1880, issue of the *Santa Fe Weekly New Mexican*. The newspaper reported that late one evening a large fish-shaped balloon passed over Galisteo Junction, New Mexico, and onlookers on the ground could hear its merry occupants. They tossed several items overboard. One item, immediately recovered, was a “magnificent flower, with a slip of exceedingly fine silk-like paper, on which were some characters resembling those on Japanese tea chests.” The next morning searchers found a peculiar cup. The evening of the following day a young Chinese man showed up in town, examined the writing on the silk paper, and recognized it as a message from his fiancée, a passenger on an airship that had flown from China on a maiden voyage to America (*New Mexican*, April 7).

No such voyage between China and America occurred, or could have occurred, in 1880. The story anticipated the yarns that would fill newspapers between November 1896 and May 1897, during the first great American UFO wave (see **Airship Sightings in the Nineteenth Century**). Though some of the reports, especially those involving overflights of cylindrical objects, seem genuinely puzzling, the press tended to treat the entire affair as a huge joke and printed some outrageous yarns about encounters with airship crews both terrestrial and extraterrestrial. One was featured in the *Stockton Evening Mail* of November 27, 1896. A publicist for the Stockton, California, Commercial Association wrote that he and an associate had encountered naked, seven-foot-tall beings who tried to carry them into a nearby airship but failed to do so because the aliens were weightless.

The most successful airship hoaxes, in that they were revived decades later and believed by some, were both published in April 1897. One came out of Aurora, Texas, where an airship allegedly crashed and killed its Martian pilot, and another originated in Le Roy, Kansas, where monstrous creatures in an airship were said to have stolen a calf.

**Hoaxing enters the UFO age.** Many hoaxes in the years after the Kenneth Arnold sighting of 1947 can more accurately be characterized as pranks. On frequent occa-

sion teenagers and other practical jokers have doctored up garbage lids, circular saw blades, and comparable artifacts, then either photographed them in flight or left them out for some guileless soul to find and take to be alien wreckage. Most such pranks involved photographs, and in no time at all the number of fake flying-saucer pictures was overwhelmingly larger than the other kind.

Popular suspicions notwithstanding, hoaxes have played a minor role in UFO reporting. Even the anti-UFO **Project Blue Book**, when it issued periodic lists of the cases it had solved and the identifications (balloons, aircraft, astronomical) assigned to them, had no specific category for hoaxes; they fell simply under "other." There just were not enough of them to warrant a heading of their own. It became clear in time that even most persons claiming bizarre UFO experiences believed what they were saying, and those who could not bring themselves to accept the reality of UFOs and UFO beings had to search for other conventional explanations than outright fabrication.

Yet spectacular hoaxes occurred from time to time. Still among the most notorious was the first major one, hatched soon after the Arnold sighting by a yarn-spinner named Fred L. Crisman of Tacoma, Washington. Crisman got an associate, Harold Dahl, to claim that on June 21 (three days before the Arnold experience) he and others aboard a boat near Maury Island, three miles from the mainland, saw doughnut-shaped UFOs disgorge metallic materials. Crisman then wrote Ray Palmer, a science-fiction editor whose magazines also carried articles on "true mysteries," and told him about it, claiming further that a threatening stranger in a black suit had warned Dahl not to talk. Kenneth Arnold flew to Washington to investigate the story. He notified a military intelligence officer, Lt. Frank M. Brown, who had investigated Arnold's report, and soon Brown and Capt. William L. Davidson of Hamilton Field in California were on the scene. Dahl confessed to them that the story was a hoax. Embarrassed for Arnold, Brown and Davidson left Tacoma without telling him what they had learned. On the way back to California their B-25 crashed after its engine caught fire, and the two men were killed. A flying-saucer legend was born, with inevitable suggestions that Brown and Davidson had been killed because they knew too much.

In 1949 two veteran confidence artists, Silas Newton and Leo A. GeBauer, representing themselves respectively as a Texas oilman and a government scientist, approached *Variety* columnist Frank Scully with a fantastic story. According to them, on three occasions the U.S. government had recovered crashed spaceships along with the bodies of their occupants, humanlike beings believed to be Venusians. Taking them at their word, Scully rushed into print with what quickly became a bestselling book, *Behind the Flying Saucers* (1950). Later, reporter J. P. Cahn uncovered the criminal backgrounds of Newton and GeBauer.

**Contactees.** In the 1950s the bulk of the controversy related to hoaxing charges centered on the claims of **contactees**, persons who purported to enjoy ongoing communications with friendly extraterrestrials often referred to as "Space



Brothers." Contactees came to prominence in southern California in the early 1950s, and many insisted their interactions with extraterrestrials were physical events. Some said they had actually flown in spaceships. The physical contactees often produced photographs and other alleged evidence, and a number wrote books and toured the lecture circuit.

Early ufologists held contactees in such contempt that few bothered to investigate their claims, since time spent on what was seen as blatant fraud could only be wasted. Yet on those rare occasions when prominent contactees were subjected to investigative scrutiny, significant disconfirming information came to light. James W. Moseley's work on **George Adamski** is considered definitive. Moseley was unable to resist the temptation to hoax Adamski in turn, and so he and a friend, flying-saucer publisher Gray Barker, wrote a letter on State Department stationery and addressed it to Adamski. "R. E. Straith" of the "Cultural Exchange Committee" told Adamski that the State Department knew his claims were true and was quietly encouraging his work. Adamski soon informed his followers that he had determined that both Straith and his committee existed, State Department denials notwithstanding.

New Jersey contactee Howard Menger suffered brief embarrassment early in his career when an accident of lighting exposed a trick he was playing on a follower. A woman was led into an unlighted room where she was to meet a spacewoman, but when a sliver of light came through the door and shone on the "extraterrestrial's" face, it turned out to be that of a close associate of Menger's. Menger went on to become one of the most famous contactees of the period.

Another early contact claim was proven years later to be a literary hoax. In 1954 a book titled *Flying Saucer from Mars* recounted author "Cedric Allingham's" meeting with a friendly spaceman whose ship he saw land in Scotland. "Allingham" proved peculiarly elusive, and in the 1980s it was reported that the real author of the book was popular-science writer and television personality Patrick Moore,



Radio Officer T. Fogl photographed what he claimed was a UFO off San Pedro, California, in 1957. He later confessed that the object was a model made from an airplane kit. (Fortean Picture Library)

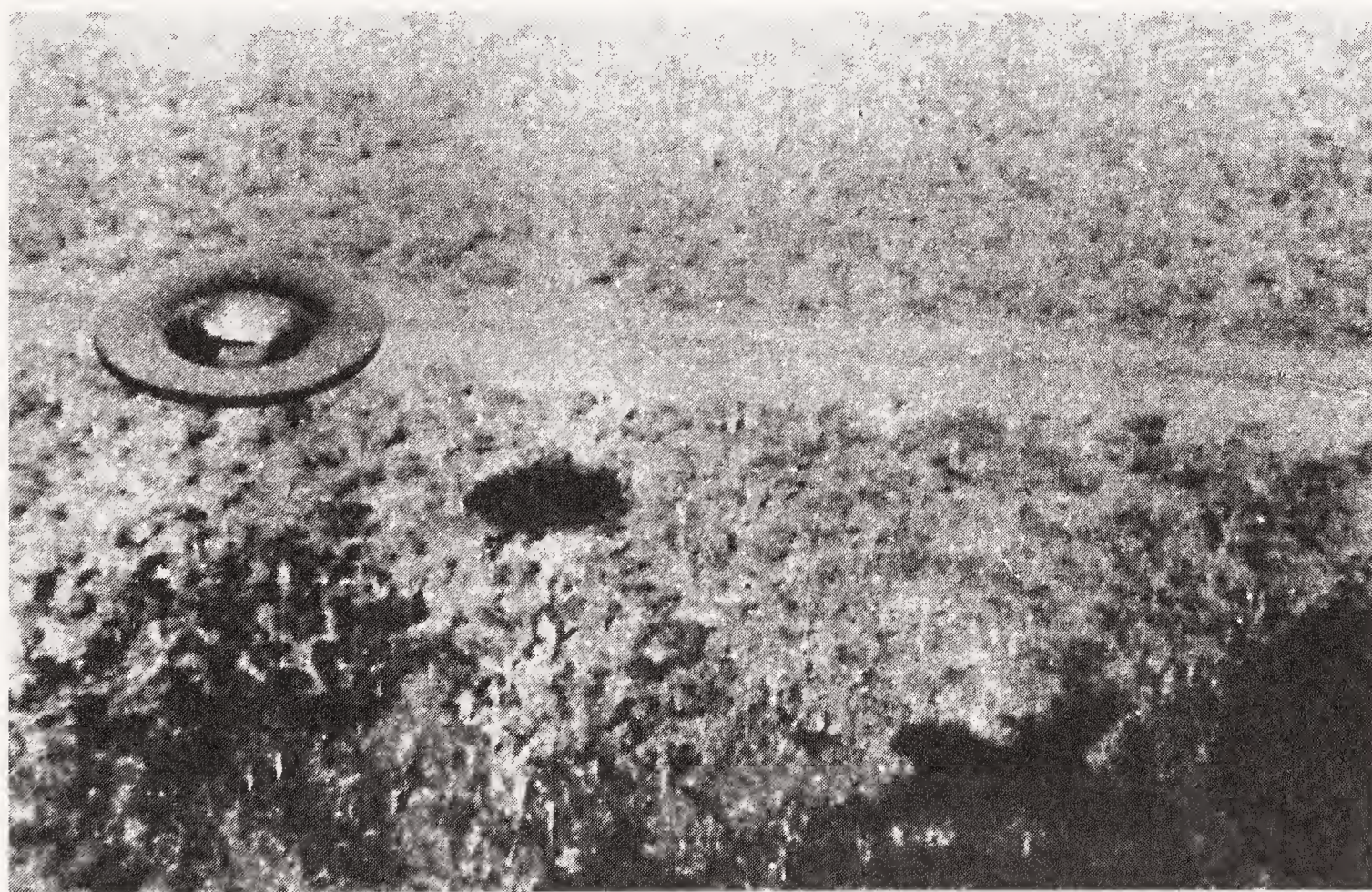


assisted by Peter Davies. Moore's motive was to spoof Adamski and show up the gullibility of his supporters.

Reinhold Schmidt of Bakersfield, California, was among the few contactees to end up in jail for activities related to his contact claims. From November 1957 onwards Schmidt reported having regular contacts with Saturnians who among other things revealed to him the locations of large amounts of quartz crystal. In due course, when investors started to suspect they had been duped, they brought their complaints to the authorities. In October 1961 an Oakland, California, jury convicted Schmidt on two counts of grand theft, and he was sentenced to one to 10 years in prison.

Otis T. Carr promoted a saucer-shaped spacecraft that he claimed to be constructing. It was, he said, powered by "free energy" and based on the secret discoveries of the great electrical scientist Nikola Tesla. Before the end of 1959, he promised, he and his associates would fly to the moon. OTC Enterprises collected hundreds of thousands of dollars from investors, but the end came when a promised test flight of the OTC-X1 failed to materialize, though hundreds had flocked to an Oklahoma City amusement park to see it. In November Carr was convicted for the illegal sale of stock and sent to prison.

**A new generation of hoaxers.** The two decades between the 1950s and the 1980s would see some remarkable hoaxes as well, including two that continue to this day. In the 1970s Swiss farmer Eduard ("Billy") Meier turned tales of 1950s-style contacts with benevolent space people from the Pleiades into a thriving business, even as conservative ufologists scoffed and penned devastating debunkings.



An Avena Airlines pilot's claim that he took this photograph of a UFO over Venezuela in 1963 turned out to be a hoax: the UFO is really a button. (Fortean Picture Library)



In the other major hoax, beginning in the mid-1960s in Spain, persons unknown posing as extraterrestrials from the planet Ummo produced many hundreds of documents, often of considerable length and technical sophistication, and sent them to European UFO enthusiasts. The Ummites also produced photographs and other artifacts to buttress their claims. Whole anthologies of Ummite writings, which kept being produced for years afterwards, have been published, and a small but devoted Ummite cult thrives in Europe.

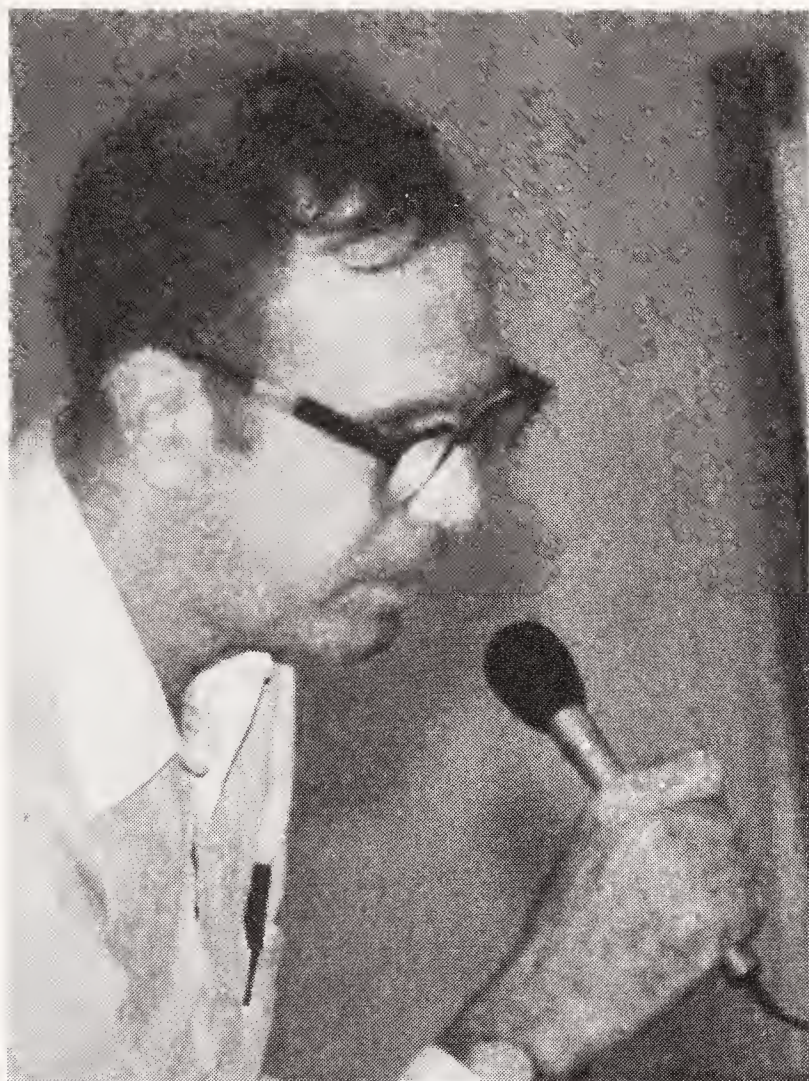
**Tabloid and other tall tales.** Other notable hoaxes of the period began as tall tales in supermarket tabloids. In September 1969, introducing what would prove to be a durable myth, the *National Bulletin* reported that the Apollo 11 astronauts had seen UFOs soon after their historic July 16, 1969, landing on the moon. As proof the tabloid reprinted the alleged transcript of radio communications between the astronauts and Mission Control. The *Bulletin* said that NASA had managed to censor the broadcast even though news media were covering the landing as a live event. The transcript, as sophisticated observers were quick to point out, was full of elementary factual, terminological, and other errors. Three years later ufologist Stuart Nixon challenged the tabloid to produce its documentation or, failing that, its reporter (identified as "Sam Pepper" in the by-line). Neither, Nixon was not surprised to learn, existed. Nonetheless, the story of the Apollo 11 encounters would live on in fringe UFO literature.

*Official UFO*, the brainchild of notorious schlockmeister Myron Fass, first treated UFO matters with reasonable accuracy, then changed its format to feature preposterous tales alleged to be true. Fass's most audacious hoax appeared in the January 1978 issue. In breathless prose the magazine recounted the destruction of Chester, Illinois, by marauding UFOs on the night of August 2, 1977. Reporters from the mainstream press interviewed residents of Chester (which, unlike the attacking UFOs, existed) and wrote tongue-in-cheek dispatches. Fass straight-facedly insisted that the incident had really happened but that the aliens had instantly rebuilt the town and erased most citizens' memory of the event.

Two science-fiction novels on UFO/extraterrestrial themes were marketed as true stories. In a paperback titled *The Terror Above Us* (1967) George Wolk, writing as "Malcom Kent," invented a UFO abduction and an onboard sexual experience. *An Account of a Meeting with Denizens of Another World 1871*—a hardcover published in Britain in 1979 and in the United States a year later—purported to be a lost manuscript written by a Buckinghamshire man, William Robert Loosley, and rediscovered by author David Langford. The book contained pictures of Loosley, his family, and even his grave. Loosley was indisputably a real man, not a literary creation; his "experience," however, was an invention of Langford, whose wife was a descendant of Loosley.

**Nonentities.** Besides these visible and widely circulated hoaxes, others received brief notice in newspapers and in the UFO literature and quickly passed into obscurity. Some of the stories involved alleged encounters with alien entities.





Controversial UFO personality James W. Moseley has both perpetrated and exposed hoaxes during his long association with ufology. (J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies)

A young Swede named Jan-Ove Sundberg claimed to have seen a landed UFO in a cleared area above Foyers Bay on Scotland's Loch Ness on August 16, 1971. Three human-shaped figures dressed in gray coverall suits emerged from some nearby bushes and entered the craft, which then took off. Just as the last figure was stepping into the ship, Sundberg snapped a photograph. Soon afterwards he communicated his alleged experience to F. W. Holiday, a fishing columnist and maverick theorist who was looking for evidence of a link between Loch Ness's monsters and UFOs (a theme he would explore at length in his 1973 book *The Dragon and the Disc*). Holiday was dissuaded from going to the site by the Rev. Dr. Donald Orman, who had agreed to conduct an exorcism of the loch; he and Holiday believed Ness's creatures to be demonic entities.

Subsequently, a Scottish ufologist familiar with the area pointed out that the clearing where Sundberg claimed the UFO was parked did not exist, and he produced a photograph to prove it. Though admitting the validity of the objection, Holiday noted that "three other people saw mysterious flying objects over Loch Ness exactly three days before Sundberg had his alleged encounter in the woods." Eventually Sundberg confessed to Swedish investigators that he had made up the story.

In November 1973 the Argentine magazine *Impactos* recounted the alleged experiences of truck driver Dionisio Llanca. It reported that at 1:15 a.m. on October 28 Llanca had been changing a tire along a rural highway some 18 kilometers from Bahia Blanca when a UFO landed and three humanlike beings, two men and a woman, approached him. Already nearly paralyzed by the light emanating from the craft, he was unable to resist when one of the men pulled him upright and the second extracted a blood sample with a razorlike instrument. Llanca then lost consciousness. When he recovered an hour later, he found himself in a rail yard nine kilometers from where he last had been. He was sick and had little memory. In a hospital, under hypnosis and truth serum, he recovered the missing time, during



which he had been aboard the UFO and spoken with its occupants. The occupants spoke back with vocal sounds reminiscent of buzzing bees. Speaking through a translation device, they warned him that the human race had better improve its ways because its present course was leading to disaster.

The magazine article and subsequent newspaper pieces based on it mentioned physicians and psychologists who supposedly had investigated the story, but when Argentine ufologists tried to check for themselves, they found that the story was an invention put together as a money-making scheme. It is not clear if either Llanca or the medical experts even existed.

**Retrieved discs.** Around dawn on September 4, 1967, a paperboy at Clevedon, near Bristol, England, discovered a five-foot-wide saucer-shaped metallic structure in a field. The police sent it to the guided weapons division of British Aerospace, and the chief design engineer declared that if it was a hoax, it was a fairly expensive

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R. E. Harrison II  
claimed to have  
taken this  
photograph of  
an extraterrestrial  
at the door of  
a UFO in 1967.

The photo is  
actually that of  
an image on a  
television screen.  
(Jerome Clark)





one; he cited a figure that equates to approximately \$700 in 1995 money. But this was hardly the end of it.

Soon five identical objects were found in fields and on golf courses throughout the southern part of the country. Eventually it was determined that the sites lay on a straight path 220 miles long spanning one degree of latitude, running west to east from Clevedon to the Isle of Sheepy in the Thames estuary in Kent. At Welford a U.S. Air Force intelligence officer took photographs, and chemists with Britain's Home Office analyzed samples of a foul-smelling liquid that seeped out from the disc.

The truth came out in due course. The prank had been cooked up by students at the Royal Aircraft Technical College in Farnborough. According to Jenny Randles:

The objects had all been molded out of a type of fiberglass and were fairly light. The smelly liquid was a concoction of flour and water. Each saucer had cost far less to make than the estimate by the guided weapons expert (perhaps 500 pounds in all at today's prices) and had been transported by car in a co-ordinated exercise involving about 15 people.

Ufologists' fascination with **crash/retrieval** reports would inspire hoaxers in the 1980s and 1990s to churn out a mass of phony documents, allegedly from official sources, attesting to cover-ups of fantastic secrets. The most notorious of these was a memo attributed to a supersecret group called Majestic-12, which directed the study of recovered extraterrestrial vehicles. The identity of the ostensible forger or forgers, still unknown, remains the subject of much speculation, but only a handful of ufologists still hold forth for the document's authenticity.

HOAXES

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Teenaged boys who took this 1967 photograph of a UFO over Lake St. Clair, Michigan, later confessed it was a hoax. (Fortean Picture Library)



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## HOPKINS, BUDD.

→ See **Abduction Phenomenon** and **Sex and UFOs**.

## HOSTILITY THEORIES.

→ See **Dark Side; Extraterrestrial Hypothesis and Ufology; Mantell Incident; and Paranormal and Occult Theories about UFOs**.



## HUMAN INDIVIDUAL METAMORPHOSIS.

→ See Heaven's Gate.

## HYBRIDS.

→ See Abduction Phenomenon; Extraterrestrial Hypothesis and Ufology; and Sex and UFOs.

## HYNEK, JOSEF ALLEN (1910-1986)

For 20 years, from the mid-1960s until his death in 1986, astronomer and former **Project Blue Book** scientific consultant J. Allen Hynek was the world's most famous and influential proponent of UFO research.

Hynek had been involved in the subject practically from the beginning, since 1948, when representatives of **Project Grudge**, the Air Force's UFO project, asked Hynek, director of the McMillan Observatory at Ohio State University, to examine the reports they had received and to alert them to those that resulted from misidentifications of astronomical phenomena. Hynek later would write that where UFOs were concerned, he was the "innocent bystander who got shot." By the time he and the Air Force parted company, in 1969, they were expressing very different views about the significance of the UFO phenomenon.

Born on May 1, 1910, in Chicago, Josef Allen Hynek graduated from the University of Chicago with a B.S. degree. In 1935, with a Ph.D. in astrophysics from the university, he left Chicago to join the Ohio State University faculty. There his work on stellar spectroscopy won him the respect of his scientific colleagues. From 1950 to 1953 he served as assistant dean of the OSU graduate school. Hynek's fame spread outside scientific circles, however, when in 1956 the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory at Harvard was given the task of training observers to track the manned satellites the U.S. government planned to launch in the near future. Director Fred L. Whipple appointed Hynek associate director. Hynek organized an international group of amateur astronomers, under the name Project Moonwatch, to assist in the tracking of the satellites.

In 1960 he became professor of astronomy and department chairman at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. As he rebuilt the moribund department, he assumed directorship both of the university's Dearborn Observatory and later, in 1964, of the Lindheimer Astronomical Research Center. He was a popular teacher and lecturer, and besides writing for astronomical journals, he also contributed articles to popular magazines on space-science subjects. He retired from Northwestern in June 1978.

But it was Hynek's association with the UFO phenomenon that made him the most famous and even controversial. Intellectual curiosity made him take up the Air Force's invitation to look at UFO reports. Hynek was initially skeptical and remained skeptical for a long time; nonetheless, he soon noticed that not all of the reports seemed easily reducible to conventional explanation. In his first, cautious statement to this effect, he wrote in a 1953 issue of a scientific journal these destined to be much-quoted words:

Ridicule is not a part of the scientific method, and the public should not be taught that it is. The steady flow of reports, often made in concert by *reliable* observers, raises questions of scientific obligation and responsibility. Is there . . . any residue that is worthy of scientific attention? Or, if there isn't, does not an obligation still exist to say so to the public—not in words of open ridicule but seriously, to keep faith with the trust the public places in science and scientists?

Hynek's reference to "ridicule" came in part from a poll he had conducted quietly among his professional colleagues in astronomy in 1952. Five percent of the 44 astronomers he contacted said they had seen UFOs themselves, but they were deeply fearful of publicity, feeling that such admissions, if publicized, could harm their careers.

Yet Hynek, too, kept his thoughts mostly to himself, even as he noted with growing dismay the Air Force's inept handling of UFO reports and its desire to explain them at any cost.

**Hynek steps out.** In the early 1960s a graduate student who had come over from France, Jacques Vallee, as well as a small number of other trusted friends and colleagues, encouraged Hynek to think more boldly about what might be happening. In 1965 Hynek made a carefully worded statement on the back cover of Vallee's *Anatomy of a Phenomenon*, a book arguing—in a more intellectually sophisticated manner than previous UFO literature—for the extraterrestrial origin of UFOs. The following year Hynek wrote the introduction to Vallee's next book (written with his wife Janine), *Challenge to Science: The UFO Enigma*. By this time Hynek's apparent turnaround on the UFO question was an open secret.

But Hynek's decision to become an outspoken UFO proponent—one who did not qualify his words—came, ironically, as a result of an episode in which he acted as a debunker. In March 1966 a flurry of sightings erupted in Michigan. Two sightings in particular attracted national press attention: an incident on the evening of the twentieth, when a farmer and his son near Dexter reported seeing a craftlike object descend into a swamp a quarter of a mile away. Summoned to the scene, police found no object but observed a glow in the woods. The next evening young women at Hillsdale College 60 miles away saw faint lights in nearby trees.

As the press clamored for an explanation, Hynek and an aide from Selfridge Field near Detroit went to the farm. When Hynek went to Hillsdale the next day, he



found similar excitement. Pressed for answers by the Air Force, newspaper reporters, and several members of Congress, Hynek consulted with a University of Michigan chemistry professor and afterwards declared, at a packed press conference, that the Dexter and Hillsdale lights were probably of "swamp gas."

In the resulting uproar Hynek was ridiculed in newspapers and cartoons all over the country. He became the butt of a long-simmering frustration with what many citizens were taking to be Air Force incompetence or dishonesty regarding UFOs.

On April 5, 1966, at a one-day hearing on UFOs sponsored by the House Armed Services Committee, Hynek argued that "the body of data accumulated since 1948 through the Air Force investigations deserves close scrutiny by a civilian panel of physical and social scientists, and that the panel should be asked to examine the UFO problem critically for the express purpose of determining whether a major problem really exists."

Eventually such a panel was formed, via an Air Force contract with the University of Colorado, as the **University of Colorado UFO Project**, under the direction of physicist Edward U. Condon. The project early became mired in controversy, amid charges that its leader and senior personnel were hostile to the subject (those who held other views, such as psychologist David R. Saunders, were fired), and in January 1969 the committee report declared that the study of UFOs had no scientific value. Citing the committee's findings, the Air Force closed down Blue Book the following December.

Another prominent scientist who had become interested in the UFO phenomenon, University of Arizona atmospheric physicist **James E. McDonald**, criticized Hynek for his slowness in alerting the scientific community to the importance of UFO sightings. McDonald launched his own campaign to spread the word but encountered personal misfortune unrelated to his UFO interests. In June 1971 he committed suicide, leaving Hynek the one major American scientist to urge serious UFO study.

**Celebrity and frustration.** In 1972 Hynek wrote *The UFO Experience*, in which he charged the Air Force with indifference and incompetence in its UFO investigations. He also critiqued the Condon report and detailed well-documented reports of six types: nocturnal lights, **daylight discs**, radar/visual observations, **close encounters of the first kind** (in which UFOs appear at less than 500 feet from the witness), **close encounters of the second kind** (in which UFOs leave physical effects or otherwise interact with their environment), and **close encounters of the third kind** (in which "animated creatures" are seen). In his concluding words he wrote, "When the long awaited solution to the UFO problem comes, I believe that it will prove to be not merely the next small step in the march of science but a mighty and totally unexpected quantum leap."

The book was on the whole well received by his colleagues. A major review appeared in the prestigious British journal *Nature*, where D. G. King-Hele remarked that "Hynek's catalogue is cumulatively impressive. . . . [T]he best argument in





Dr. J. Allen Hynek at MUFON conference in 1983. (Fortean Picture Library)

favor of UFOs is . . . that all striking new advances in science are at first treated with derision by scientists." In *Science* Bruce C. Murray wrote, "Hynek has won a reprieve for UFOs with his many pages of provocative unexplained reports and his articulate challenge to his colleagues to tolerate the study of something they cannot understand."

Yet hostility to the subject remained. *Science* at first refused to publish a letter Hynek wrote on the subject in August 1966, but eventually relented, running an abridged version. It would publish nothing else favorable to UFOs.

In 1973 Hynek founded the Center for UFO Studies (which would be renamed the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies after his death). In 1976 CUFOS started issuing a magazine, *International*

*UFO Reporter*, and later the refereed *Journal of UFO Studies*. It held conferences in 1976 and 1981 and published monographs on well-investigated cases. From the beginning Mimi Hynek, Allen's wife, was actively involved in CUFOS' operations. For a time CUFOS could even afford a full-time investigator, Allan Hendry, owing in part to publicity Hynek and CUFOS received for their part in helping to promote Steven Spielberg's 1977 UFO epic whose title was taken directly from Hynek, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, in which Hynek had a cameo role.

Hynek became a regular speaker at conferences and conventions, where he was hailed by most as a hero of ufology. With the passing of time, he began speaking openly of his longtime interest in occultism. Such talk made the more conservative ufologists, including many of his associates in CUFOS, uncomfortable and brought ridicule from debunkers.

By now his friend Vallee had rejected ufology's **extraterrestrial hypothesis** in favor of more exotic phenomena of a psychic nature. (See **Paranormal and Occult Theories about UFOs**.) Hynek, always fascinated by Vallee's adventurous speculation, agreed, and the two discussed the subject frankly (if briefly) in *The Edge of Reality* (1975), a book consisting of transcripts of conversations between the two. A third and final book, *The Hynek UFO Report* (1977), reviewed the Blue Book records. (A fourth book bearing Hynek's name, *Night Siege* [1987], was written by

**HYNEK,**  
**JOSEF ALLEN**  
**(1910-1986)**



the two other listed authors; by the time the contract was signed, Hynek was far too ill to contribute more than a by-line.)

From the founding of CUFOS onward, Hynek sought major funding for UFO research, but the money proved elusive. Finally in 1984 he believed he had secured a promise of significant financial support from a wealthy European benefactor. He resigned as president of CUFOS (putting designated successor Mark Rodeghier in his place) and in the spring of 1985 moved with Mimi to Scottsdale, Arizona, to establish the International Center for UFO Research (ICUFOR). But he soon grew disenchanted with his new associates, whose concerns he found to be metaphysical and commercial rather than scientific. He disassociated himself from the new operation not long after medical diagnosis revealed that he was suffering from the brain tumor that eventually would kill him. He died on the evening of April 27, 1986, at Scottsdale Memorial Hospital.

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→ See Van Tassel, George W.

## INTEGRATRON.

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## IRAN CE2

Late on the evening of September 18, 1976, residents of Tehran, Iran, observed what they took to be a multicolored aircraft hovering a few thousand feet in the air. Several called the nearby Mehrabad airport, but their reports were ignored until finally chief air traffic controller Houssain Perouzi decided to look for himself. His binoculars focused on an unusual object at 6000 feet altitude and five miles' distance. The object, which had blue lights on its right and left sides and a red flashing light in the middle, was moving in an erratic fashion, changing colors and even its apparent shape.

Perouzi handed the glasses over to another controller. Then passing aircraft reported that they were hearing emergency beeper signals on their radios. Puzzled and alarmed, Perouzi notified a duty officer, who quickly contacted his superior, Gen. Youssefi. Youssefi stepped out onto his porch and spotted the object, then contacted two military radars, one at Shaharoki (135 nautical miles west-southwest), the other at Babolsar (88 miles to the northeast). Neither was picking up



anything, possibly because the mountains surrounding Tehran were blocking off the signals. The radar at Mehrabad was not operating at the time.

At the general's direction an F-4 was dispatched from Shaharoki at 1:30 a.m. But when it got within 25 nautical miles of the UFO, its instrumentation and communication ceased functioning. Only when the pilot pulled away did functioning resume. He continued to pursue it at a safe distance until he thought he had chased it over the Afghan border. But when he turned back toward Tehran, he was startled to see the UFO ahead of him. Evidently it had beaten him to his own destination. Youssefi, now in the control tower, was in radio contact with the pilot, whom he ordered to close in on the intruder. Every time he got within 20 miles of it, however, he suffered the same avionics failure that he had experienced earlier. His plane running low on fuel, he was forced to give up the chase. The object was now about 14 miles away and 15,000 feet in the air.

A second jet took off from Shaharoki at 1:40. Twenty-seven miles from the target, the aircraft's radar picked up an object the size of a "707 tanker." As the pilot closed on the UFO, it moved away, as his radar confirmed. A U.S. Air Force memo prepared by Lt. Col. Olin R. Mooy, who interviewed the pilot, tells what happened next:

The visual size of the object was difficult to discern because of its intense brilliance. The light that it gave off was that of flashing strobe lights arranged in a rectangular pattern and alternating blue, green, and orange in color. The sequence of the lights was so fast that all the colors could be seen at once. The object and the pursuing F-4 continued on a course to the south of Tehran when another brightly lighted object, estimated to be one-half to one-third the apparent size of the moon, came out of the original object. This second object headed straight toward the F-4 at a very fast rate of speed. The pilot attempted to fire an AIM-9 missile at the object but at that instant his weapons control panel went off and he lost all communications (UHF and interphone). At this point the pilot initiated a turn and negative G dive to get away. As he turned the object fell in trail at what appeared to be 3-4 NM [nautical miles]. As he continued in his turn away from the primary object[,], the second object went to the inside of his turn[,], then returned to the primary object for a perfect rejoin.

Shortly after the second object joined up with the primary object[,], another object appeared to come out of the other side of the primary object going straight down at a great rate of speed. The F-4 crew had regained communications and the weapons control panel and watched the object approach the ground anticipating a large explosion. This object appeared to come to rest gently on the earth and cast a very bright light over an area of about 2-3 kilometers. The crew descended from their altitude of 25,000 to 15,000 and continued to observe and



mark the object's position. They had some difficulty in adjusting their night visibility for landing, so after orbiting Mehrabad a few times they went out for a straight in landing. There was a lot of interference on the UHF and each time they passed through a mag. bearing of 150 degrees from Mehrabad they lost their communications (UHF and inter-phone) and the INS fluctuated from 30 degrees to 50 degrees. The one civil airliner that was approaching Mehrabad during this same time experienced communications failure in the same vicinity (Kilo Zulu) but did not report seeing anything. While the F-4 was on a long final approach[,] the crew noticed another cylinder-shaped object (about the size of a T-bird [jet trainer aircraft] at 10 NM) with bright steady lights on each end and a flasher in the middle. When queried the tower stated there was no other known traffic in the area. During the time that the object passed over the F-4 the tower did not have a visual on it but picked it up after the pilot told them to look between the mountains and the refinery.

During daylight the F-4 crew was taken out to the area in a helicopter where the object apparently had landed. Nothing was noticed at the spot where they thought the object landed (a dry lake bed) but as they circled off to the west of the area[,] they picked up a very noticeable beeper signal. At the point where the return was the loudest was a small house with a garden. They landed and asked the people within if they had noticed anything strange last night. The people talked about a loud noise and a very bright light like lightning. The aircraft and area where the object is believed to have landed are being checked for possible radiation.

The Iran military conducted an official investigation and interviewed the two pilots, their co-pilots, and the two controllers in the tower. (The latter did not see the landing, which took place 15 miles south of the airport, out of their view.) Gen. Abdulah Azerbarzin, who had sat in on the interviews, later told physicist/ufologist Bruce Maccabee that the radars on both aircraft had been jammed when they locked onto the UFO. One of the craft had almost passed under the UFO. The pilot described the object as looking, in the general's words, "just like a saucer, and the shape of the cockpit was a ball ... half a ball, and the color of the lighting of the cockpit was different with [sic] what it had on the outside. It was close to yellow."

Gen. Azerbarzin claimed that complete records of the investigation had been turned over to the U.S. Air Force. Nonetheless, the Air Force steadfastly maintained that its only record of the incident was the Mooy memo. (Two students of official UFO policy have written, "Reliable sources within the government have told us that the Iranian case file was about one and a half inches thick.") In any case, copies of that memo went to an impressive list of offices and agencies: Secretary of State, Central Intelligence Agency, White House, Air Force and Army Chiefs of Staff, Chief



of Naval Operations, Defense Intelligence Agency, Commander in Chief of U.S. Naval Forces in the Middle East, Commander in Chief of the U.S. Air Force in Europe, European Defense Air Command, and Commander in Chief of Forces in Europe.

A Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) "Report Evaluation" rated it "High (Unique, Timely, and of Major Significance)." It went on:

An outstanding report. This case is a classic which meets all the criteria necessary for a valid study of the UFO phenomenon:

- a) The object was seen by multiple witnesses from different locations (i.e., Shemiran, Mehrabad, and the dry lake bed) and viewpoints (both airborne and from the ground).
- b) The credibility of many of the witnesses was high (an Air Force general, qualified aircrews, and experienced tower operators).
- c) Visual sightings were confirmed by radar.
- d) Similar electromagnetic effects (EME) were reported by three separate aircraft.
- e) There were physiological effects on some crew members (i.e., loss of night vision due to the brightness of the object).
- f) An inordinate amount of maneuverability was displayed by the UFOs.

In its third-quarter 1978 issue *MIJI Quarterly*, a classified publication circulated among U.S. agencies involved in electronic intelligence, reported on the incident. The article was declassified in 1981.

No satisfactory explanation for the incident has ever been proposed, though debunker Philip J. Klass would attempt one. In Klass's view, the witnesses initially saw an astronomical body, probably Jupiter, and pilot incompetence and equipment malfunction accounted for the rest. Klass's theory presumes a remarkable lack of even rudimentary observing and technical skills on the parts of the Iranian participants. In some ways it would be easier to credit the notion, for which no evidence exists either, that the witnesses consciously fabricated the sighting. Both Gen. Azerbarzin and air controller Perouzi considered the incident thoroughly puzzling. So, as the documents indicate, did American analysts familiar with it.

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IRAN CE2







## JAL SIGHTING

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One of the most publicized UFO encounters of the 1980s occurred on November 17, 1986, over Alaska. The witnesses were the captain, first officer, and flight engineer of a Japanese Airlines Boeing 747 cargo plane on a flight from Paris to Tokyo.

At 5:10 p.m. local time, as the aircraft, at 35,000 feet, was passing over northeastern Alaska, Capt. Kenju Terauchi, a veteran pilot, noticed some unusual lights to his left and about 2000 feet below him. He decided that they were probably from military aircraft. But a few minutes later, when the position of the lights had not changed, suggesting they were keeping pace with the 747, Terauchi and his crew began to pay them closer attention.

As Terauchi completed a left turn, the lights abruptly were directly in front of the aircraft, and much closer. Now they resembled two pairs of rectangular-to-square arrays of "amber and whitish" lights, with "jets" pulsating in the direction of a dark vertical panel at the center of each object. After several seconds the jets ceased shooting fire and became "small circles of lights" like "numerous exhaust pipes." The two UFOs, between 500 and 100 feet in front of the 747, were "about the same size as the body of a DC-8 jet." After about five minutes the objects positioned themselves side by side.

At 5:19 Terauchi asked Anchorage flight control if it was tracking anything near the aircraft. It wasn't. A conversation ensued in which efforts were made to



identify the lights. The transmission, however, was sometimes garbled. As the captain reported later, "The VHF communications, both in transmitting and receiving, were extremely difficult for 10 to 15 minutes while the little ships came close to us and often interfered with communication from Anchorage."

The Anchorage controller notified the Air Force at Elmendorf Regional Operational Control Center (ROCC) and asked it to try to see what its radar was picking up.

Meanwhile the two lights moved off to the left. Terauchi saw an object, apparently a third UFO, some seven or eight miles away. The two other, smaller lights were flying toward it. He was able to pick up the distant object on the aircraft's radar. Though barely visible to the eyes of the crew, the radar indicated it was quite large. It remained on the screen for several minutes.

On the ground the ROCC radar controller reported to Anchorage that he was getting some "surge primary return," meaning a radar signal unaccompanied by a transponder signal. (A transponder is an airplane transmitter that sends out a coded signal in response to a signal from a ground station.) When the ROCC controller speculated that the trick might be erroneous, Anchorage, which was also picking it up, assured him that "it's not erroneous." Anchorage wanted to know if the base was certain it did not have a military aircraft in the area. ROCC said it did not.

Now ROCC was tracking a "primary return" in the approximate location the pilot was describing. But by 5:28 the return was gone. In the air the JAL crew were watching the lights off to the left and below them, near the horizon. The objects were too far to the left now to be tracked on the aircraft radar. To the crew's left the sky was dark; stars and planets had now become visible, and the two smaller UFOs were becoming indistinguishable from the other lights.

As the plane approached within 20 miles of Eielson Air Force Base to the northeast and within 30 miles of Fairbanks to the east-northeast, they looked behind them at a pale white light, the one they had tracked earlier. This time they saw, according to Terauchi, the "silhouette of a giant spaceship," apparently visible because it was reflecting the lights from the ground. It looked like an enormous Saturn-shaped structure. Terauchi would refer to it as the "mothership," speculating that the two relatively smaller objects had come from and gone back to it. He estimated that it was the size of "two aircraft carriers."

The captain frantically radioed Anchorage and asked for permission to take evasive measures. Approval was granted quickly, but the huge UFO stayed behind them in the same position even when they turned and descended. At 5:39 it disappeared, but not before ROCC had tracked an anomalous target in the vicinity of the plane. At 5:40 Anchorage asked the captain if he would like a jet to be scrambled, but Terauchi declined. (He later explained that he feared for the safety of the interceptor pilot.)

ROCC was briefly tracking the target again, and the JAL crew were seeing the “mothership” behind them once more. With the 747 running low on fuel, Terauchi knew he had to land at Anchorage no matter what.

At 5:40 a United Airlines passenger jet had left Anchorage heading north for Fairbanks. Soon it was at 29,000 feet. Since it was at the same approximate elevation as the JAL 747 (which was at 31,000 feet), Anchorage, which had an unidentified target on its radar, asked the UA pilot if he could see anything behind the JAL flight. But by the time the UA aircraft got close enough to see, the “mothership” had disappeared.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) launched an investigation. FAA official Jack Wright interviewed the crew shortly after the plane had landed. Another interview was conducted that same evening by two FAA special agents. An FAA investigation continued into January. On March 5 the FAA announced it “was unable to confirm the event” because “a second radar target near the JAL flight at the time of the reported sighting was not another aircraft but rather a split radar return from the JAL Boeing 747.” (Nonetheless Hank Elias, in charge of the FAA’s air traffic division in Alaska, said the FAA was less than “absolutely positive” about this explanation.)

Physicist/ufologist Bruce Maccabee, who conducted his own investigation, noted:

The [FAA] press release did not mention that the “split return effect” was contradicted by the fact that the extra echo did not come back with every sweep of the radar and by a statement by an air traffic controller who said that they don’t usually get a split image in the area that the JAL jet flew. The press release offered no explanation for the sighting, nor did it dispute the crew’s claim that something unusual was seen.

A month and a half before the FAA announcement, the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP), a debunking group, declared it had “solved” the JAL sighting. In a January 22 press release it said “at least one extraterrestrial object was involved—the planet Jupiter, and possibly another—Mars.” The solution was credited to the chairman of CSICOP’s UFO Subcommittee, Philip J. Klass.

Maccabee countered that the “solution” had been offered before all the facts were in. According to him, Klass

made a major error in not waiting for the release of the complete package of information compiled by the FAA. Had he waited he would have found that the publicized versions of the sighting were actually quite accurate in their descriptions of the lights, although they were far from complete, and the descriptions certainly rule out Jupiter and Mars as explanations.... For example, [Klass] did not know that the widely publicized drawings of the arrays of lights were more detailed versions of

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the sketches made by the captain only hours after the event. Nor did he know that the other crew members, in separate interviews, supported the captain's report of seeing a multiplicity of lights appear in front of the plane and pace the aircraft for 10 minutes or more. Nor did he know that the arrays of lights rearranged themselves from one above the other to side by side, a reorientation that Jupiter and Mars would have found difficult to do.

Without the information package it was impossible to reconstruct from radar data the flight path of the aircraft. Without the flight path it was impossible to determine the exact heading of the aircraft, and therefore the directions that the pilot and crew were looking at various times, since they gave sighting directions with respect to the heading of the aircraft. Therefore the analyst might not have realized that just before the end of the sighting, when Jupiter was ahead of the plane and to the left (about at the 10 o'clock position), the UFO "mothership" was behind and to the left (at the seven-to-eight o'clock position).

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### JARROLD AFFAIR.

→ See Men in Black.

### JUNG AND UFOS.

→ See Paranormal and Occult Theories about UFOs and Psychosocial Hypothesis.

# K

KEEL, JOHN ALVA.

→ See Men in Black; Paranormal and Occult Theories about UFOs; and Psychosocial Hypothesis.

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## KENTUCKY ABDUCTION CASE

Just after 11:15 p.m. on January 6, 1976, as Mona Stafford, Louise Smith, and Elaine Thomas were heading home to Liberty, Kentucky, driving southwest on Route 78 from a late dinner in Lancaster, they spotted an intense red glow high in the eastern sky. The glow grew larger and more intense, then descended rapidly and silently at an angle until it was positioned to the right of the car at tree-top level. The witnesses discerned a disc shape with round windows; around each of them, blinking red lights rotated in a counterclockwise direction. A row of yellow lights stretched beneath these. The object was topped with a luminous blue dome.

Stafford recalled, "The dome was blinding, and it reflected on a metallic surface which I'm sure was more than one hundred feet wide." The object moved toward the car, executed a tight half-circle maneuver, and flipped on its side. Now just to the left of the car, it flashed three shafts of bluish white light on the road. Then one shined into the vehicle, illuminating the interior as if it were daylight.



Smith, who had been behind the wheel, stopped the car and got out. She looked "petrified," according to Stafford, who pulled her back inside. Smith would have no recollection of this part of the episode. Stafford noticed a "dead silence. Even the wind stopped." Back inside the car, Smith felt weirdly "deserted." Tears were flowing from their eyes. Their skin tingled as if burned, and then severe headaches set in.

The UFO's lights switched off. The car was moving at 85 mph, Smith was horrified to discover. But even when she took her foot off the accelerator, the vehicle continued at this reckless pace. She asked Stafford, sitting next to her, to help her steer. Stafford, who could barely see at this stage, tried, to no avail. "It felt like we were traveling over road hurdles or flying in air pockets on an airplane," Smith recalled. "All I could see was a long, straight road ahead, with no lights, no houses, nothing I could recognize." To Stafford it felt as if the car were "being pulled and we were going over a long, straight road"—though Route 78 is not straight. Even more weirdly, the engine was off.

Then, in what seemed like no more than a moment, the landscape was familiar again. They were just outside Hustonville, eight miles from the location (one mile south of Stanford) where they had been when they first saw the UFO. When they got to Smith's trailer house, they gulped down glasses of cold water to assuage a deep thirst.

Smith happened to glance at the kitchen clock. It read 1:25. She was shocked. It should have taken no more than 50 minutes to make the trip between

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Louise Smith,  
Elaine Thomas,  
and Mona Stafford  
claimed to have  
been abducted by  
a UFO while  
driving on Route  
78 in Kentucky on  
January 6, 1976.  
(Fortean Picture  
Library)





Stanford and Liberty. Another shock hit when she looked at her wristwatch. Not only did it indicate 6 o'clock, but the minute hand was moving as if it were a second hand. She and her friends checked the bedroom clock, which confirmed the kitchen-clock reading. Close to an hour and a half was unaccounted for.

The three tried to reconstruct the night's events. Stafford called the state police, who expressed no interest. The burning sensation continued, even intensified.

Eventually Stafford and Thomas returned to their respective residences. The next morning, all three woke up to continuing physical discomfort, including raw skin, burning eyes, blisters, and headaches. Later Stafford would see her physician, who prescribed eyedrops. They did not help.

**Investigations and investigators.** After news of the incident leaked (without the witnesses' permission) into local media in February, ufologists tried to interview the women, who said they desired no publicity. Finally, they were persuaded to cooperate, and on February 29 a team of investigators associated with the Texas-based Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) met personally with the women. Ufologist Leonard H. Stringfield noted that "the effects of the close encounter were still painfully apparent." The three looked drained and tense. All complained of sudden weight loss. Stafford's eyes showed "strong traces of inflammation." Smith lifted the hair on the nape of her neck to reveal what Stringfield described as a "round pinkish-gray blotch the size of a half dollar."

The missing time was a particular source of distress to the women. Stringfield suggested that perhaps hypnosis would be able to peel away the layer of amnesia. On March 7, **Aerial Phenomena Research Organization** (APRO) consultant R. Leo Sprinkle, a University of Wyoming psychologist, attempted hypnosis on Stafford, who recounted the consciously recalled parts of the episode but became hysterical as Dr. Sprinkle's probing brought her to the unrecalled part.

Though none of the women had said anything about seeing occupants, Stringfield produced a drawing that depicted beings reported in various **close encounters of the third kind**. Stringfield said nothing, but Stafford quickly pointed to one of the pictures and declared, "This is it." He asked, "Is this what you saw after you mentioned the light coming into the car?" Stafford replied that she had a mental image that "comes and goes . . . fades and reappears like fog." (Later, according to Stringfield, Thomas would independently point to the same figure.)

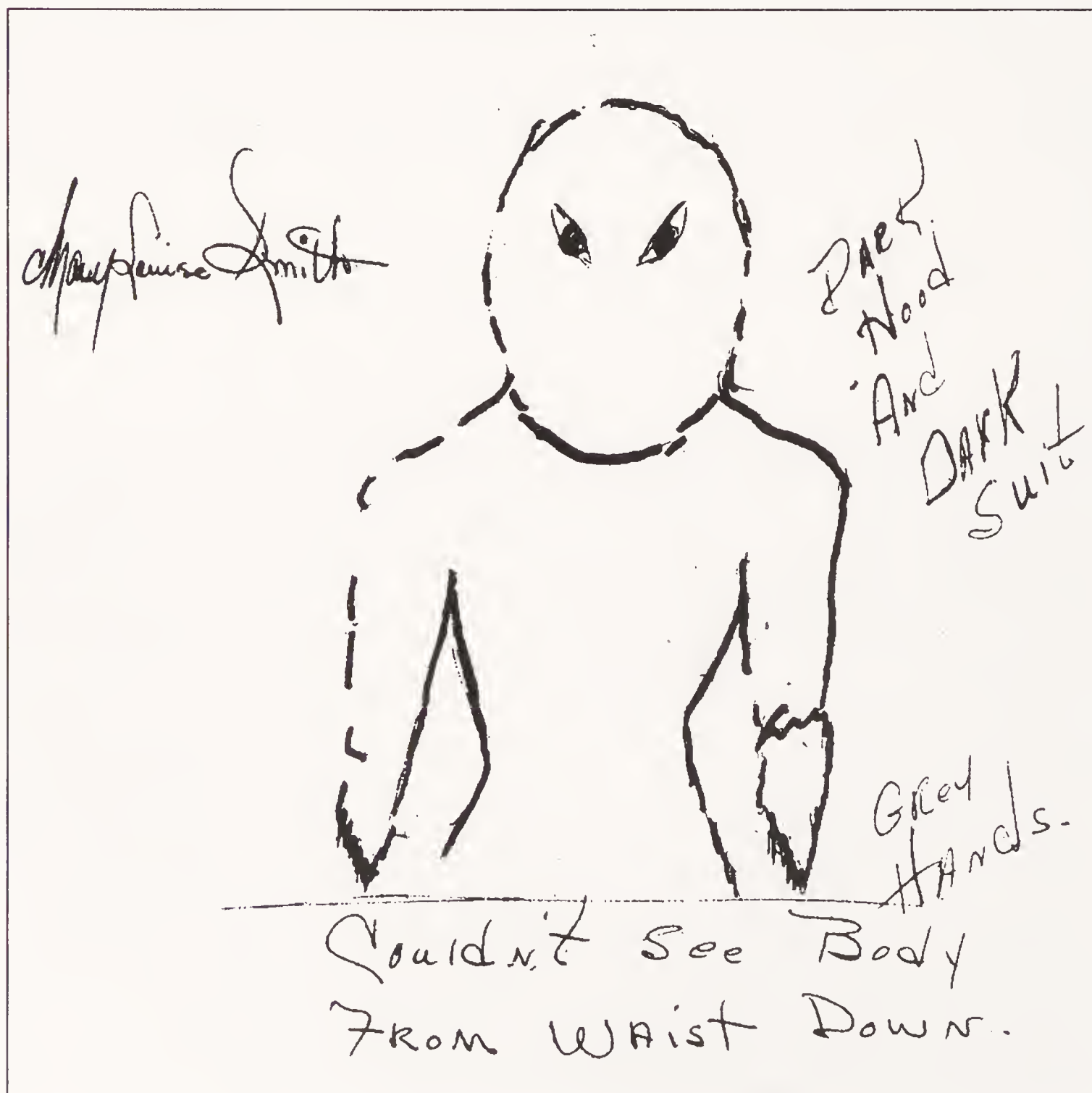
Stringfield's action would leave him open to criticism that he had helped shape the subsequent testimony by planting ideas and images into the psyche of a woman in an impressionable psychological state. While such criticism is justified, it must also be said that by 1976 the **abduction phenomenon**, with its characteristic missing time and interaction with humanoids, was widely known. The simple fact that a witness was being hypnotized to "recall" what had happened during a UFO sighting had implications no one, including Stafford, could have failed to understand.



At this stage the investigation bogged down over funding problems. None of the participating UFO organizations—APRO, MUFON, or the Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS)—was able or willing to spend the money to send a qualified professional back to Kentucky to continue the hypnotic regression. Then one of the MUFON team, Jerry Black, took it upon himself to bring the *National Enquirer* into the story, notwithstanding a pledge the investigators had made to keep the story out of the newspapers, and especially out of the *Enquirer*. Black negotiated a deal that brought Sprinkle to Kentucky and paid the women for their cooperation.

The *Enquirer* also secured the services of James Young, a detective with the Lexington police department and an experienced polygraph examiner. On Friday, July 23, each woman took the test. The results indicated, Young said, that the women were sincere. This was hardly surprising. All three were devout Christians—Smith even performed in a gospel band—and had good reputations locally.

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Louise Smith's depiction of an alien being she encountered during her abduction. (Fortean Picture Library)

Over the weekend the three women separately underwent hypnosis. No full or entirely coherent account emerged, though their stories were generally compatible. Stafford “remembered” being taken from the car and finding herself on a white table or bed in a dark, uncomfortably hot room. A bright white light from which a “power” or energy emanated seemed to be holding her down as an eyelike device examined her. Several small figures wearing “surgical masks” and “surgical garments” observed her. A weblike structure was before her, and a burning liquid substance covered her. She felt a sensation of pressure against her eyeballs.

Under hypnosis she made a cryptic reference to a sensation of “being in a volcano.” Subsequently, in normal consciousness, she explained what she meant:

It was a long tunnel, dark inside with an opening at the top. It’s clear now; at the end I can see an operating room. Everything is white, a white, round light shining on a white table, and I can see four small beings around the table. They have a tube on somebody’s stomach.... It’s a woman there on the table, but I can’t tell who it is. Maybe it’s me on that table being examined.

Thomas “remembered” leaving the car and being in a “chamber” with a window. She could see humanoid beings, four feet tall and gray-skinned with dark eyes, walking back and forth. A cocoonlike device was wrapped around her neck like a noose. When she tried to speak or think, the noose tightened and choked her. For a time a bullet-shaped object was placed above her left breast.

Smith’s “memories” were the vaguest of the three. She spoke of feeling the car being tugged backward. Next she was surrounded by a “strange darkness,” with intense heat burning her flesh. A scalding liquid was poured on her, and she had the impression that she was being examined. Her throat was dry. She could not move her arms. Later that weekend she would refuse an offer to undergo hypnosis again.

The evening of January 6, numerous area residents reported seeing an object generally described as “oval-shaped and large, with a brilliant circle of lights.” It traveled silently and would stop to hover occasionally, then shoot away “at great speed.” One sighting of particular interest took place at 11:30 p.m. just a few hundred yards from the site of the three women’s encounter. From the window of their home, a couple observed a brilliantly lighted object shaped like a light bulb. It was heading toward the south.

**Aftermath.** On July 29, when Stringfield called Smith to ask how she was doing, she said she was in bed, too ill to go to work. Moreover, she added, something “terrible” had happened within the last 24 hours. Late the previous night, “a voice or whatever it was” had caused her to awaken from a sound sleep and drive alone to the encounter site. She had stood there for some time, feeling severely frightened but unable to leave. Once she felt a tugging at her hands. Suddenly, at 3 a.m., she ran to her car and headed for nearby Stanford. Along the way she noticed that two rings were missing from one hand and another ring from the other. None of them could have come off by accident; on those rare occasions she took them off, she



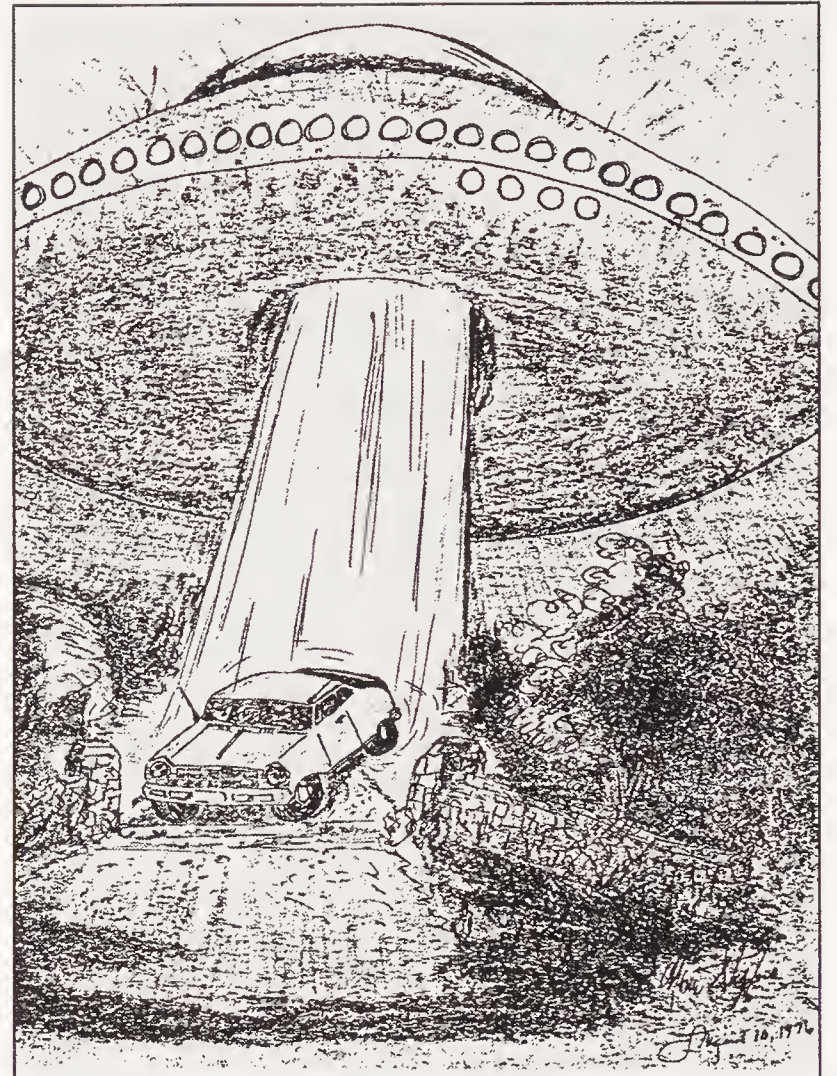
had to moisten her hands with soap.

The following morning she and a police officer looked for the rings without success. In September, however, two of them mysteriously reappeared near the door to her trailer home.

Over time the women's "memories" of the missing period grew somewhat more elaborate. Stafford said, "The aliens separated us, and I can remember leaving one ship and finding myself aboard another, with three floors, and there was a dome over me.... Somehow, I also had the feeling I was in a cave or volcano—underground somewhere." Smith recalled that the aliens wore hoods and their bodies were covered. Their eyes were "frightening . . . large and pointed towards the temples"; their hands were "like a bird wing would be if you could stretch it out."

Stafford claimed to have had another encounter with an alien being. As part of the emotional fallout from her UFO experience, she moved in with her parents for a period of time. One evening, however, she decided to return to her trailer. She was lying on the couch when a mental "voice" directed her to turn around. A being, five feet tall and bathed in light, stood near her kitchen counter. Dressed in a shiny robe, the figure "looked the way they were described in biblical days," she reported. His hair and beard were of a reddish gold color.

Stunned and fascinated, Stafford ignored the figure's command (again telepathic) to look into his eyes. She obeyed the second command, knowing she could not fight it. She had already tried to pick up the telephone, but a "force" prevented her from getting close to it. She would be uncertain about what happened immediately thereafter. She did recall an odd remark: "Buree, the mind is still hungry." Afterwards the figure "just vanished." Fleeing to her parents' house, she tried to find "Buree" in the dictionary and the Bible. She was certain she had "heard" right, but there appeared to be no such word.



Mona Stafford's drawing depicts the UFO that overtook the vehicle in which she was riding with Louise Smith and Elaine Thomas. (Fortean Picture Library)



The women did not soon recover from their encounter. For a while Sprinkle took frequent phone calls from them as they sought information and reassurance. Each had several **paranormal** experiences that, though they did not involve UFOs or aliens, each associated with the UFO experience. Smith eventually moved to Las Vegas, and Stafford lived for a time in Florida before returning to Kentucky. Thomas died in 1978.

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During the 1950s and until the mid-1960s, when astronomer and **Project Blue Book** consultant **J. Allen Hynek** took up the cause of UFO reality, Donald E. Keyhoe, a retired Marine Corps major, was the world's most famous UFO proponent. To mainstream ufologists—those who rejected the claims of **George Adamski** and other **contactees** but who were otherwise sympathetic to the possibility of interplanetary visitation—Keyhoe was widely regarded as the leader of the field.

Born June 20, 1897, in Ottumwa, Iowa, he left high school to attend the Naval Academy Preparatory School in Annapolis, Maryland, before entering the Naval Academy proper. In 1919 he received a B.S. degree and was commissioned a lieutenant in the Marine Corps. Three years later a plane crash in Guam and a resulting arm injury sent him to the U.S. Naval Hospital in Washington, where he began writing to pass the time. Still troubled by the injury, he retired from the Marines in 1923. Between 1924 and 1926 he did editing work for the Coast and Geodetic Survey. In 1926 he was appointed chief of information of the Civil Aeronautics Branch of the



U.S. Department of Commerce. That same year he managed the national tour of a plane flown by Floyd Bennett and Richard E. Byrd over the North Pole. In 1927 he was designated an aide to Charles A. Lindbergh as Lindbergh set forth on an American tour to celebrate his recently completed solo flight to Paris. Keyhoe's account of the experience appeared in his first book, *Flying with Lindbergh* (1928).

From 1928 on Keyhoe was a successful free-lance writer whose work was published in leading periodicals. During World War II Keyhoe went back on active duty and served with the Naval Aviation Training Division. By the time he left the service after the war, he was a major in the Marines.

In 1949 *True*, then a popular men's magazine, asked Keyhoe, who had contributed aviation arti-

cles to its pages, to look into the UFO story. A few months of investigation persuaded Keyhoe not only that the objects were from other planets but that the Air Force knew as much and was covering up the fact. The resulting article, published in the January 1950 issue and titled "Flying Saucers Are Real," caused a sensation and sold a record number of copies of the magazine.

The article was expanded into a paperback book and released as *The Flying Saucers Are Real*, which sold 500,000 copies. In the breathless, pulpy style that would characterize all of his UFO books, Keyhoe communicated his conviction that the Air Force knew or suspected that UFOs were coming from other worlds. Fearing public alarm, it played down the importance of sighting reports, proposed phony explanations, and hid its true feelings and most sensitive cases. Information about the reality of UFOs would be released slowly to the American public so that it would be prepared when the whole story came out. UFOs have been surveying the earth for at least two centuries, but this "observation suddenly increased in 1947, following the series of A-bomb explosions begun in 1945." The absence of clearly hostile incidents suggested that the aliens viewed *Homo sapiens* with a friendly eye.

Other books in the same vein followed: *Flying Saucers from Outer Space* (1953), *The Flying Saucer Conspiracy* (1955), and *Flying Saucers: Top Secret* (1960). The first of these was based in large part on case material cleared for him by the Air



UFO investigator and author Donald E. Keyhoe. (Fortean Picture Library)



Technical Intelligence Center (ATIC), which oversaw Project Blue Book. Some individuals associated with or privy to the official UFO investigation, such as Albert M. Chop of the Air Force Press Desk at the Pentagon, were almost openly sympathetic to the **extraterrestrial hypothesis**. In fact, in a letter on Department of Defense stationery reproduced on the back of *Outer Space's* dust jacket, Chop praised Keyhoe as a "responsible, accurate reporter" and remarked that "if the apparently controlled maneuvers reported by many competent observers are correct, then the only remaining explanation is the interplanetary answer." Keyhoe even met an officially designated Air Force spokesman, who agreed that the official Air Force solution to the **Washington National radar/visual case**, that the radar returns were caused by temperature inversions, "couldn't possibly explain" the reports.

Not surprisingly, Keyhoe took all this to mean that a faction within the Air Force "believed that sighting reports should be made public to prepare the country for the final solution." Another faction agreed the UFOs were real and otherworldly "but feared the effects of a public admission." A third group consisted of "hard-headed nonbelievers."

One-time Blue Book head **Edward J. Ruppelt** would ridicule this interpretation, insisting that the Air Force had been almost entirely aboveboard in its dealings with the public. But intimations of high-level concern about UFO reports continue to attract attention and trigger controversy even today.

**The NICAP years.** In January 1957 Keyhoe replaced T. Townsend Brown as director of the **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP), formed the previous October. With a prestigious Board of Governors consisting of retired military officers, professors, scientists, clergymen, and journalists, NICAP launched a campaign for congressional hearings of the UFO cover-up.

Already an able spokesman for ufology, Keyhoe's credibility was enhanced by his association with the respected citizens who lent their names to NICAP. Over the next decade the Air Force and NICAP skirmished over the hearts and minds of Congress members, who occasionally showed interest. Yet the Air Force had Keyhoe outgunned. Moreover, NICAP was plagued with incessant financial problems. Complaints about Keyhoe's managerial skills, which critics held to be minimal, and authoritarian style grew in volume. Other problems, however, were beyond Keyhoe's or anyone's control. In the wake of declining interest in the UFO phenomenon, NICAP's membership had sunk to 4000 from a peak of 12,000. In 1969, with NICAP on the brink of collapse, the Board of Governors demanded and received Keyhoe's immediate resignation.

Keyhoe retired to his Luray, Virginia, home and wrote what is generally considered his worst book, *Aliens from Space* (1973), remembered chiefly for its promotion of Operation Lure, a naive scheme to entice extraterrestrials to land. As Keyhoe described it, "The Lure will be an isolated base with unusual structures and novel displays, designed to attract the UFO aliens' attention. . . . [It] will have three or more dummy UFOs. . . . Near the dummy UFOs will be several one-story

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'educational buildings' containing a variety of exhibits intended to interest the UFO crews."

**Last years.** After leaving NICAP, the aging Keyhoe maintained little contact with the larger UFO community. In 1977 he wrote the forward to a book about spaceships and cover-ups, *Situation Red, the UFO Siege!*, by his old friend Leonard H. Stringfield, and the next year he spoke in Dayton, Ohio, at the annual conference of the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON). In 1981 he accepted an invitation to join the MUFON Board of Directors but did little more than lend his name to the organization.

Keyhoe died on November 29, 1988.

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## KINGMAN CRASH/RETRIEVAL CASE.

→ See Crashes and Retrievals of UFOs.

## KINROSS CASE

K  
KINROSS  
CASE

On the evening of November 23, 1953, Air Defense Command radar detected the presence of an unidentified object moving at 500 mph over Lake Superior. An F-89C all-weather interceptor, piloted by Lt. Felix Moncla, Jr., with radar observer Lt. R. R. Wilson in the rear cockpit, was dispatched from Kinross Air Force Base, near the Soo Locks in northern Michigan. Under radar guidance the jet headed toward the target.

At 8000 feet, 70 miles off Keweenaw Point, and 160 miles northwest of the Soo Locks, the blip of the F-89 and that of the UFO merged, then faded from the screen. Nothing more was heard from the interceptor, and no trace of it was ever found, despite an extensive search.

A brief statement, prepared by the Public Information Office at Wisconsin's Truax Air Force Base (which handled such duties for bases in the area), was given to the press. By the next day, however, an Air Force spokesman at the Pentagon claimed that the unidentified object was a Royal Canadian Air Force C-47 and that the F-89, far from colliding with it as the radar reading indicated, had never been any closer than miles from it. The fate of the F-89 after that was unclear, the Air Force contended; it had crashed for unknown reasons.

The Canadian government denied on several occasions that any incident involving one of its aircraft and a USAF interceptor had occurred on the date in question. In any case, the official Air Force version implied an implausible incompetence on the parts of radar operators at such a sensitive installation. The official version has it that Moncla may have suffered from vertigo and lost control of his aircraft, though records indicate he was flying on instruments. No transcript of Moncla's radio conversation with the controllers has ever been released.

The Air Force gave conflicting accounts to Moncla's widow. First she was told that the F-89 had flown too low in its effort to identify the Canadian plane and crashed into the water. Subsequently, another officer asserted that the interceptor had exploded at a high altitude.

**Disappearing aircraft.** For years rumors have circulated that the Air Force is covering up other cases in which UFOs apparently snatched military aircraft. The most interesting of these stories comes from the testimony of M. Sgt. O. D. Hill of **Project Blue Book**—or so Cleveland ufologist Tom Comella would assert in a nationally published magazine article that has never been challenged.

According to his account, on February 4, 1956, Comella and three other civilian UFO investigators met with Air Technical Intelligence Center (ATIC) representatives at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, where Blue Book was headquartered. Their purpose was to discuss two cases in which low-flying objects had passed over residential areas. The ATIC personnel promised to get back to them. But they heard



nothing until June 28, when Edgar Smith, a member of the civilian group, received a visit from M. Sgt. Hill, though Hill had not participated in the original meeting. After initially reciting the standard anti-UFO Blue Book line, Hill told Smith that the project existed to "prevent another Pearl Harbor." He said that "our planes have [been] and still are disappearing from the sky." Then, asking not to be quoted, he related two cases.

The first of these sounds in every way except one like the Kinross episode. The sole discordant detail is Hill's reference to a "thorough search of the land area"; the Kinross case took place, of course, over a body of water. Perhaps Hill's recall was imperfect. Smith's notes have Hill saying this of the second case:

A transport plane with 26 persons aboard was rapidly approaching its air base some 10 miles from shore. Back on land at the radar station the operator was carefully tracking the transport plane and was in constant radar communication with the plane. Suddenly the radar operator spied a second blip on his radarscope. He immediately radioed the transport and advised the pilot to beware of the alien object.

The UFO was traveling at a high rate of speed, about 2500 mph. It jumped about on the radarscope like a tennis ball. All of a sudden the mysterious blip headed straight for the transport plane, and before the radar operator could warn it, the two objects had united into one on the radar screen. The one remaining blip sped straight up at a terrific rate of speed. A surface search of the water in the vicinity revealed no oil slick, although a general's briefcase was found floating. The plane has completely disappeared.

Hill told Smith that such incidents had officials worried. Two hundred scientists were at work on the UFO problem for the U.S. government.

As soon as Hill left his house, Smith called Comella to summarize the sergeant's account and to tell him Hill was on his way. Hill repeated the stories to Comella and added that many top officials believed UFOs to be of extraterrestrial origin. A month later Smith and Comella saw Hill at ATIC headquarters, then met separately with the new Blue Book head, Capt. George T. Gregory. When asked about the disappearance cases, Gregory attributed them to "bugs or small birds [that] get into the radar pattern." When Comella asked if birds were responsible for the aircraft's disappearance, too, Gregory said, "Well, we just cannot talk about those cases."

Hill never disputed Comella's version of events. There seems no reason to doubt that Comella's account of their interaction is correct. To date, however, no independent confirmation of the second disappearance case (if we assume the first to refer to the Kinross event) has surfaced.

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K  
KUWAIT  
SIGHTINGS

## KLASS, PHILIP JULIAN.

→ See Abduction Phenomenon; Coyne CE2; Delphos CE2; Hill Abduction Case; Iran CE2; JAL Sighting; Lakenheath-Bentwaters Radar/Visual Case; McDonald, James Edward; McMinnville Photos; Marshall County CE2; Ocala Radar/Visual Case; RB-47 Radar/Visual Case; Socorro CE2/CE3; and Walton Abduction Case.

## KUWAIT SIGHTINGS

In January 1979 the American embassy in Kuwait City sent this message to the State Department in Washington, DC:

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1. A series of UFO sightings on November 9 [1978] caused the GOK [Government of Kuwait] to appoint an investigatory committee of experts from the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR). The committee's report, which was released January 20, described eight sightings from November to December 14. A number of the early sightings took place near a Kuwait oil company gathering center north of Kuwait City. Release of the committee's report was something of a media event as it coincided with Jan. 21 front page stories of yet another UFO sighting over Kuwait City, which included photographs in local newspapers.

2. The KISR committee rejected the notion that the UFOs were espionage devices but remained equivocal about whether they were of extraterrestrial origin. The KISR committee representative, Ratib Abu Id, told Emboff [embassy official] that the scientists did not know enough about the phenomenon to say with certainty that they weren't spaceships. The report went on to recommend that the government take all measures to protect Kuwait's airspace and territory as well as the country's oil resources.

3. Some local wags have made light of the first UFO sightings which came near the end of the long and traditionally exuberant holiday celebrations of Id Al Adha. However, we have learned recently of an event



coincident with one of the UFO sightings which has confounded some of our most level-headed Kuwaiti friends and may have been what persuaded the GOK to make a serious investigation of the matter. A senior Kuwaiti Oil Company (KOC) official told us the UFO which first appeared over the northern oil fields seemingly did strange things to KOC's automatic pumping equipment. This equipment is designed to shut itself down when there is some failure which may seriously damage the petroleum gathering and transmission system, and it can only be restarted manually. At the time of the UFO's appearance, the pumping system automatically shut itself down and when the UFO vanished, the system started itself up again. This event was not addressed by the KISR committee report.

4. Even those who are not inclined to believe in visitors from outer space do tend to think something strange has been going on in Kuwaiti airspace. There has been speculation, for example, about helicopters or hovercraft bringing refugees or money out of beleaguered Iran. At the least, the phenomena have stimulated a new degree of interest among top Kuwaiti officials in the country's air defense system which did not react in any way to the "events" in the KOC north field because it was closed down.

Attempts by civilian ufologists to obtain a copy of the KISR report were rebuffed on the grounds that the document was "confidential." It has yet to be released.

Press accounts from the period provided additional, albeit still sketchy, details. The pumping-station incident reportedly occurred on November 10. There were seven witnesses, one of them an American. A cylinder-shaped structure "bigger than a jumbo jet," with a large dome and flashing lights, the UFO landed silently and remained on the ground for seven minutes before effecting a rapid departure.


At 5:30 a.m. on November 21 a UFO appeared over an oil field near the Iraqi border. An employee took photographs of it as it passed a water tower and then hovered over the site for half an hour. Meanwhile, according to the *Kuwait Times*, long-distance communications ceased functioning. The internal phone system worked, however, and workers were able to alert their superior, who stepped outside and saw the UFO.

Another alleged photo, taken on December 2 by a civil servant walking along a beach, showed a domed disc with a self-luminous tube protruding from the bottom. Other witnesses also saw the UFO.

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## LAKENHEATH- BENTWATERS RADAR/VISUAL CASE

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**A**t 9:30 p.m. on August 13, 1956, a radar station at Bentwaters, Suffolk, England, where the Royal Air Force and the U.S. Air Force jointly ran an air base, picked up a target 25 to 30 miles to the east-southeast. The return was in all ways but one like that of an ordinary aircraft; what made it remarkable was that the object was moving between 4000 and 9000 mph. Over a period of 30 seconds it moved in a straight line from its original location to a location 15 or 20 miles northwest of Bentwaters.

A few minutes later a group of about a dozen targets were spotted eight miles southwest of Bentwaters. The Bentwaters radar operator later told **Project Blue Book** investigators that "these objects appeared as normal targets on the GCA [Ground Controlled Approach] scope and . . . normal checks made to determine possible malfunctions of the GCA radar failed to indicate anything was technically wrong." In front of the 12 or so objects, radar indicated, three others flew in triangular formation, all separated by 1000 feet. The objects in the rear were scattered at irregular intervals, and in all they covered an area of six or seven miles.



They seemed to be moving at 100 mph, more or less, and were heading northeast. Forty miles from Bentwaters something bizarre occurred: all the targets appeared to converge into one huge target, which caused a return several times bigger than a B-36 would under comparable circumstances. After remaining stationary for the next 10 or 15 minutes, the target resumed movement to the northeast, then stopped again for three to five minutes. Finally it was lost to radar heading north. All this occurred over a 25-minute period.

A T-33 on its way back to Bentwaters was directed to look for the objects, but a 45-minute search, unaided by airborne radar, resulted only in sightings of a bright star in the east and a coastal beacon. The pilots' inability to see the objects has caused this aspect to be the most controversial—critics would say weakest—part of the sighting, though atmospheric physicist **James E. McDonald**, who conducted an extensive analysis of the case, argued that for a number of technical reasons the returns could not have been caused by anomalous propagation.

At 10 p.m., only minutes after the above episode had concluded, another target, again as solid as an aircraft, appeared on the screen. It moved at more than 4000 mph, the operator thought—though McDonald concluded the real figure should have been 12,000 mph—to the west until it got within 25 miles of the station, when it vanished from the screen.

At 10:55 yet another target was picked up, this one 30 miles to the east, heading west at 2000 to 4000 mph. It passed nearly directly overhead and disappeared from the screen 30 miles from the base. This time observers both on the ground and in the air (a C-47 pilot glimpsed it beneath his plane) saw the object.

Now the center of action shifted to nearby Lakenheath AFB, to the west-northwest of Bentwaters. During or immediately after the radar/visual sighting, Bentwaters notified Lakenheath, where ground personnel saw a luminous object come in on a southwesterly heading, stop, then shoot off toward the east. Two white lights appeared (apparently from different directions; Blue Book records are vague on this point), "joined up with [one] another, and both disappeared in formation together." Before doing so, the UFOs performed "rapid acceleration and abrupt stops," recorded on two radar screens at Lakenheath.

At midnight Lakenheath called the chief fighter controller on duty at the RAF Station at Neatishead, Norfolk, and reported that a strange object was buzzing the base. The fighter controller, F.H.C. Wimbledon, recalled, "I scrambled a Venom night fighter from the Battle Flight through Sector, and my controller in the Interception Cabin took over control of it. The Interception Control team would consist of one Fighter Controller (an Officer), a Corporal, a tracker and a height reader. That is, four highly trained personnel in addition to myself could now clearly see the object on our radarscopes." The Venom headed in its direction, saw a bright white light, and picked it up on its radar, but soon both the light and target disappeared. Immediately afterwards the interceptor was directed to another target over Bedford, north of Cambridge, and the navigator locked on to it on his

radar; it was, he said, the “clearest target I have ever seen on radar.” This object, 10 miles east of Lakenheath, suddenly appeared *behind* the plane, but when the pilot turned around, the UFO remained on his tail. According to a statement by one of the ground radar operators, the pilot “tried everything—he climbed, dived, circled, etc., but the UFO acted like it was glued right behind him, always the same distance, very close, but we always had two distinct targets.”

After 10 minutes, with fuel running low, the Venom headed back to the base. The UFO followed it a short distance, then stopped and hovered in the sky. A second Venom was scrambled, but equipment problems forced it to abort its mission. Two ground radars tracked the UFO’s departure northward at 600 mph.

Lakenheath continued to note periodic anomalous radar echoes until 3:30 a.m.

This extraordinary episode was classified until 1969, when it was discussed in the final report of the **University of Colorado UFO project** (informally known as the Condon Committee, after its director, physicist Edward U. Condon). The account characterizes the Lakenheath/Bentwaters case as the “most puzzling and unusual . . . in the radar-visual files. The apparently rational, intelligent behavior of the UFO suggests a mechanical device of unknown origin as the most probable explanation of this sighting.” Later and elsewhere, the committee’s investigator, physicist Gordon David Thayer, would write: “There is simply no way that any known sort of anomalous propagation effect could account for this. In fact, any explanation even remotely conceivable seems to demand the presence of some physical object in the air over Lakenheath.”

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In a 1974 book debunker Philip J. Klass argued that a combination of operator error, anomalous propagation, and meteors had caused the radar contacts and visual sightings. He debated the issue in letters with Thayer, who countered that Klass’s interpretation was based on factual errors, implausible assumptions, and technical misunderstandings. Martin Lawrence Shough, who conducted an in-depth reanalysis of the case in the 1980s, judged the Lakenheath/Bentwaters events to be “probably the most impressive of their kind on record.”

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## LANDING TRACES.

→ See Close Encounters of the Second Kind; Delphos CE2; Falcon Lake CE2; Langenburg CE2; Moore Case; Socorro CE2/CE3; Trans-en-Provence CE2; and Valensole CE2/CE3.

# LANGENBURG CE2

Around 11 a.m. on Sunday, September 1, 1974, as he was harvesting his rape crop, 36-year-old Edwin Fuhr of Langenburg, Saskatchewan, slowed his swather to a crawl, intending to turn before he got too close to a slough at the south end of the field. Looking to check his position, he was surprised to see a metallic dome. Wondering what it was doing there, he got off the swather, walked to within 15 feet of the object, and observed it carefully over the next two minutes. He noticed that the four- to five-foot-high grass around the object's base was moving in a clockwise direction. Next he saw that the object was spinning.

Suddenly uneasy, he backed up, all the while keeping his eyes on the thing. He did not turn around even when he got to the swather. Instead he went around it and got on from the back. Once in the seat, he was shocked to see four similar domes to his left. "The color of the machine[s] was like a brushed stainless steel," he said. "The bottom part had that lip on it, and it was dark gray in color like it had been hot at one time, like steel that gets hot and cools off." All were the same size, and all were spinning as they hovered a foot or so above the ground. Two were positioned close together, and the five were arranged roughly in a semicircle around the slough. The grass under each was moving. The UFOs, about five feet high and 11 feet across the base, were featureless except for what appeared to be grooves of a slightly darker color.

Fuhr tried to get the swather moving, but the throttle and the steering wheel would not respond. He would never be sure whether this was because they were not working or because the fear he was feeling had sapped his strength.

The objects rose in a step formation into the air in order, starting with the first (nearest) one he had seen and moving out to the most distant. The movement was so fast that, as Fuhr told investigator Ted Phillips, "If you had winked you would have missed the take-off from the ground to the point where they stopped." At 200 feet altitude they stopped abruptly, positioning themselves in a straight horizontal line. The spinning ceased, and six-foot puffs of dark gray "vapor" poured

out of two exhaustlike extensions at the base, followed by a powerful gust of wind that flattened the rape that had been standing underneath. After a minute or two the objects ascended into low clouds and disappeared from view. The sighting had lasted about 15 or 20 minutes.

When the stunned Fuhr finally got off his seat, he walked over to the slough and found five rings of depressed grass swirled clockwise. Inside the second of these Fuhr noticed additional depressions as if something had probed around in the grass. It was, he later remarked, "the size of a fifty-cent piece . . . [T]he grass was all twisted and you could see marks like something had jumped here and there, all over." Three of the rings were 11 feet in diameter. One was eight feet, and the other—the fifth, or most distant—was 10 feet. In each of them, the grass stood erect only at the center.

Fuhr resumed work. At 12:30 p.m. he returned home and sat down to dinner with his wife and parents, who could see that he was upset. Asked why, he said, "I saw something this morning." He compared it to a stainless steel bowl on the table. Soon afterwards his father went to the site with Fuhr and was astonished at what he saw.

That evening Fuhr's brother-in-law, who had been visiting the family, called Royal Canadian Mounted Police Constable Ron Morier. The following morning Morier drove to Fuhr's farm. He told an investigator later that month:

I could see that he was still . . . quite shaken. . . . He was jumpy, and you could see just by looking at the guy that he had been scared. But he took us out there and sure as hell, there they were, five circles. . . . I had never seen anything like that before. . . . The thing that really stood out was that the grass was all flattened out in a clockwise fashion. I got down on my knees and put my face near the grass, trying to smell some kind of exhaust or afterburn or something like that. There was no odor to it at all. But it was really swished tight, you know. I mean it was really flattened and matted together. . . .

I believe that he saw something and I don't see why he would exaggerate what he saw. There is no way that this is a hoax. . . . [P]eople who know him . . . all believe that he did see something out there. . . . Whatever was in there, it came out of the air and departed the same way, as far as I could tell.

In short order Fuhr's story and the curious effects in the grass attracted media attention all across Canada, bringing hundreds of reporters and curiosity-seekers to the remote farm. On September 21 and 22 Ted Phillips, a Missouri-based ufologist specializing in ground-trace cases, interviewed Fuhr, his family, Morier, and others. He learned that the morning of the encounter, the cattle at a neighboring farm had become so agitated that they broke through the fence in four places. Moreover, the previous midnight, Fuhr's dog had barked furiously but without apparent provocation. According to Fuhr:



The neighbor's dogs barked too. They all barked at the same time Saturday night, about midnight. Then they barked about three o'clock in the morning. Jack, our neighbor, had a babysitter who was frightened because the dogs were barking and when Jack came home, he said the dogs were still barking. On Monday night about 10:30 the dogs were barking. My dog had been out in the field area and he backed up to the house. The television was acting up about then too. The dog wouldn't go out into the field. He usually follows me, but he wouldn't go out there. But the dogs were barking on Monday night and on Tuesday morning I found that mark there. When I heard the dog barking Monday night, I thought, "It couldn't be out there again. Even if it is, no way am I going out there."

"That mark" was a sixth circle in formation with the other five. Fuhr found a seventh, also in the arclike pattern, on September 15.

There were other circles, too. On the fourteenth three were discovered on a farm a mile east of the Fuhr site; they were like Fuhr's except that these were in a cultivated crop, not in the grass. That same day a circle of flattened wheat, 14 feet in diameter and twisted in a counterclockwise direction, appeared in a field 200 miles to the northwest, near Young, Saskatchewan. Over the next several weeks others were found near Peebles, Lake Lenore, and Dinsmore—15 in all at seven sites in the province.

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### LAS VEGAS CRASH/RETRIEVAL CASE.

→ See Crashes and Retrievals of UFOs.

### LAYNE, N. MEADE.

→ See Contactees and Paranormal and Occult Theories about UFOs.

### LEE, GLORIA.

→ See Contactees.

## LEVELLAND SIGHTINGS

## LEVELLAND SIGHTINGS

In early November 1957 a UFO wave erupted in the United States, and for a few days the nation's newspapers were full of reports of spectacular sightings, many alleged to have occurred at close range. The first widely publicized cases are among the most impressive and today are considered classics.

Authorities were alerted to the presence of something out of the ordinary when a badly frightened farm worker, Pedro Saucedo, called the sheriff's office in the west Texas town of Levelland on the evening of the second. Saucedo told an officer, A. J. Fowler, that as he and Joe Salaz were driving on Route 116 four miles west of town, they spotted a flash of light in a nearby field. The light then rose and headed toward their truck with ever increasing speed. Suddenly the truck's lights and engine died. Saucedo leaped out of the cab and lay flat on the ground as the UFO streaked directly over the vehicle "with a great sound and a rush of wind," he reported. "It sounded like thunder, and my truck rocked from the blast. I felt a lot of heat." Once it had passed, Saucedo stood up and watched it disappear in the east. It was rocket-shaped and 200 feet long. Soon his vehicle was working normally again.

Though Fowler did not take the story seriously, he was forced to reconsider his skepticism when an hour later someone called to tell what had happened to him on Route 116 four miles *east* of Levelland. Jim Wheeler said he had just seen a 200-foot-long, egg-shaped, brightly lit object on the road, and when he got close to it, his engine and lights ceased functioning. Wheeler was getting out of his car when the UFO ascended. Its lights blinked out, and as they did, his lights and engine resumed operation.

At 10:55 p.m.—though the report would not come to light till later—two married couples in a car near Shallowater, Texas, saw a flash of light in the southwestern sky, in the direction of Levelland. For three seconds the radio and headlights failed.

Five minutes later, according to his phoned account to the authorities, Jose Alvarez, 11 miles north of Levelland on Route 51, encountered a large, glowing object sitting on the road and experienced the by-now-familiar electrical difficulties with his car. At 12:05 a.m. Newell Wright (who reported his experience the next day) was puzzled when his car abruptly died near Smyer, about 10 miles east of Levelland, and as he got out and lifted the hood to see what the problem was, he was startled to see an oval-shaped object on the road. More than 100 feet long, it was glowing bluish green. Wright dashed into his car and frantically tried to start it, without success. A few minutes later the UFO shot straight up, then headed north and vanished. Afterwards the car started.



At 12:15 another call came into the sheriff's office, this one from Frank Williams, who had seen a landed UFO around Whitharral, where Alvarez had been. This time there was a twist: the UFO pulsed steadily, and each time it glowed bright, the car's power went out. The object left with a thunderous sound. Other reports came from Ronald Martin on Route 116 at 12:45 a.m., James Long just north of Levelland at 1:15, and Sheriff Weir Clem on the same road at 1:30. Clem and a deputy, who were looking for the UFO, saw an oval "like a brilliant red sunset" pass over the road some 300 yards ahead of the car. Fifteen minutes earlier and a bit farther north, Levelland fire marshal Ray Jones encountered an object and experienced brief light and engine difficulty.

In the early morning hours of November 3, that evening, and the next day, many miles to the southwest, there were reports of similar objects in the White Sands area of New Mexico and at least one instance of vehicle interference.

The official **Project Blue Book** explanation for the Levelland sightings is that ball lightning and St. Elmo's fire were responsible. Though the objects neither looked nor behaved remotely like these natural phenomena, Air Force investigators based their hypothesis on the belief that an electrical storm had been in progress during the sightings. In fact, the sky was overcast, and there was some mist, but there was no lightning. In any case, as Blue Book's onetime scientific consultant, astronomer **J. Allen Hynek**, dryly observed some years later, there is an "absence of evidence that ball lightning can stop cars and put out headlights."

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## LOCH NESS MONSTERS AND UFOS.

→ See **Hoaxes** and **Paranormal and Occult Theories about UFOs**.

## LOCH RAVEN DAM CE2

LOCH RAVEN  
DAM CE2

Late on the evening of October 26, 1958, Alvin Cohen and Phillip Small were rounding a curve 200 to 300 yards south of Bridge No. 1 on Loch Raven Dam, near Baltimore, Maryland. As Cohen would tell investigators from **Project Blue Book**, "we saw . . . what appeared to be a large, flat sort of egg-shaped object hanging between 100 to 150 feet off the top of the superstructure of the bridge over the lake."

They decided to investigate, but when they got within 75 feet of the bridge, the car died, and the entire electrical system went out. Small, the driver, and Cohen got out and stood behind the car:

We watched [the UFO] from that position for approximately 30 to 40 seconds, and then I'm not sure of the sequence of events here. It seemed to flash a brilliant flash of white light, and we both felt heat on our faces. Concurrently, there was a loud noise that I interpreted as a dull explosion and Mr. Small as a thunder clap. Then very quickly . . . the object started to rise vertically. It didn't change its position, as far as we could tell, during the rising. The only different feature it had while it was moving was that it was very bright and the edges became diffused so that we couldn't make out the shape as it rose. It took from five to 10 seconds to disappear from view completely. We were very frightened.

The witnesses thought the UFO was 100 feet long because, in Small's words, "it occupied approximately one-third of the bridge, at the height it was at. . . . After it disappeared from sight we came back into the car and turned the ignition system on, and it immediately went into operation."

They sped to the nearest phone and called the Ground Observer Corps. The man who took the call merely laughed. The two then notified police. As they recounted their experience to Cpl. Kenneth Hartmann and Patrolman Richard Fink, they noticed that their faces felt as if they were burning. Concerned about possible exposure to radiation, they went to St. Joseph's Hospital in Baltimore, from which they were released after a brief doctor's examination.

Subsequent investigation uncovered confirmatory testimony from a number of witnesses. Between 9:05 and 9:15 p.m., slightly over an hour before Cohen and Small's sighting, two men driving on Loch Raven Road, where the bridge is located, spotted a luminous object hovering over a field. Another couple reported the same phenomenon that evening. At 10:45, about 10 minutes after the Cohen-Small encounter, a man saw a white, luminous object move in a straight line for 60 seconds, then abruptly disappear.



An even more direct confirmation came from customers and employees at Peerce's Plantation Restaurant, a mile north of the bridge. They heard a loud boom or explosion at the same time Cohen and Small reported the sound, but they did not go outside to investigate the source.

In his official report 2nd Lt. Bert R. Staples, who investigated the case for the Air Technical Intelligence Center, wrote:

There was no unusual meterological [sic] activity in the area, no thunderstorms[,] and the weather was quite clear. . . . Natural fluorescent gases, etc., can be ruled out due to the noise involved. No special projects are known to be operating in that area.

As far as this investigation has gone, this UFO remains unidentified.

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## LOS ANGELES RAID OF 1942.

→ See UFOs, 1900-1946.

## LUBBOCK LIGHTS

The most famous of a legendary and controversial series of sightings of odd aerial phenomena occurred at 9:10 p.m. on August 25, 1951, and was witnessed from a backyard in the small Texas city of Lubbock. The observers were three Texas Technical College professors whose discussion of micrometeorites was interrupted by the sudden appearance of a fast-moving, semicircular formation of 20 to 30 lights, as intense as bright stars but bigger in apparent size. Blue-green in color and silent, the lights moved from northeast to southwest and were lost to view in seconds.

Whatever they were, the professors quickly realized, they were not meteors, micro- or otherwise. And while they were still discussing the first flight, a second showed up and repeated the first's performance. When a story on their sightings appeared in the Lubbock newspaper, three Lubbock housewives reported that they

had seen peculiar flashing lights in the sky that same evening. So, too, did Carl Hemminger, associate professor of German at Texas Tech. J. Russell Heitman, head of the journalism department at Texas Tech, said he had seen an identical group of lights several days earlier.

Between August 25 and November 1 the professors, and in some cases other witnesses in their company, saw between 10 and 12 such flights, though after the first sighting the objects tended to appear in an irregularly clumped group. One evening's events are recounted in an official report based on interviews conducted by Howard Bossartt of the Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) at Reese Air Force Base:

On 1 September 1951, the original group of three [chemical engineer A. G. Oberg, petroleum engineer and department head W. L. Ducker, and geologist W. I. Robinson] met again in Dr. Robinson's garden and were joined by E. R. Heineman, professor of mathematics, and Dr. E. F. George, professor of chemical engineering. Once again, at about 9:20 p.m., a flight came over. It was similar to previous flights, but rather more irregularly grouped. On through the evening, at fairly regular intervals, four more flights moved across the sky from North to South. And then at 12:17 a.m., the most unusual sighting was observed. This flight passed directly overhead, flying very low, in the general direction of North to South, and was seen by every member of the group. Dr. Robinson observed that in the case of this flight, an irregularly shaped yellow light appeared in the rear. The formation included dark diffuse areas, and the arc itself quivered or pulsated in the direction of its travel. Each object had an angular magnitude that would be the equivalent of 12 inches across at a distance of 30 or 40 feet, and in violent agitation. . . . The flight had the appearance of a group of 12 to 15 pale objects, producing a pale-yellow blinking light and moving noiselessly.

On one evening (perhaps September 5) Robinson, Oberg, and Ducker were joined by two colleagues, Drs. Grayson Mead and John Brand, who sat in Robinson's front yard, their eyes turned skyward, waiting for the lights to appear. As Mead would recall:

We sat for quite a long while and kept watching the sky. . . . [S]uddenly we first sighted the objects just a little bit before they were directly overhead. I suppose maybe they were 10 or 20 degrees to the north. These objects went over so fast that it is hard to say now exactly how many there were. We don't know whether there were a number of objects or whether it was the lights of just one object itself.

The objects appeared to be about the size of a dinner plate and they were greenish-blue, slightly fluorescent in color. They were smaller than the full moon at the horizon, but might have been about the size of the moon overhead. I think there must have been about a dozen or fif-



teen of these lights[;] they were in a cluster and they all moved exactly together, so we don't know if they were different objects all moving at the same rate of speed or whether there was just one object with these different portholes of light.

They went over so fast, and we were so taken by surprise[,] that we wished that we had a little bit longer time so that we could have had a better look, but all five of us saw them[;] we compared what we had seen and I don't think there was any discrepancy in our descriptions. We all saw the same thing. I think it must have taken something like maybe two to three seconds to pass overhead, certainly not very long, but we can't judge at this time how long. There was no way to tell how high they were or what size they were. There wasn't anything for comparison. There was just the apparent size and they went over very rapidly.

People have suggested later that this was merely the reflection of the streetlights on the breasts of birds going over head. These objects were too large for any bird outside of [sic] something like a very large duck or goose. I have had enough experience hunting and I don't know of any bird that could fly close enough that could go this fast that we would not be able to hear. There was absolutely no sound to this at all—not a sound!

As far as I can remember and as far as I can tell, they were absolutely circular. We don't know if they were disc-shaped or spherical, but the portion that we could see, I am sure[,] was just absolutely round. It couldn't possibly have been that round if it had been a reflection from a bird. To have gone as fast as this, to be birds, they would have had to be exceedingly low to disappear quite so quickly. And, had it been birds, I think we would have heard the noise. The feeling . . . it gave all of us would be very hard to describe . . . an extremely eerie feeling.

Mead alludes to an explanation first proposed within a few hours of the professors' original sighting. The hypothesis may have been inspired by Oberg's remark that the "individual objects which made up the formation were indistinct, but gave off a glow, apparently reflected light, possibly from the city below." Yet Ducker, another of the professors, was adamant in his insistence that the objects were "definitely not birds," and his colleagues and fellow witnesses concurred. On September 5 one of the group stated:

There have been three flights tonight, and at last we observed one group passing above a cloud which gave us a more concrete idea of the altitude. Assuming that such a cloud crossed Lubbock at 2000 feet, the objects would have been maintaining a speed in excess of 600 miles an hour if they were barely above the cloud they passed over. The objects moved across a 120-degree arc in two seconds, and if you reduced the altitude to a point where ducks would cross such an arc at their top or



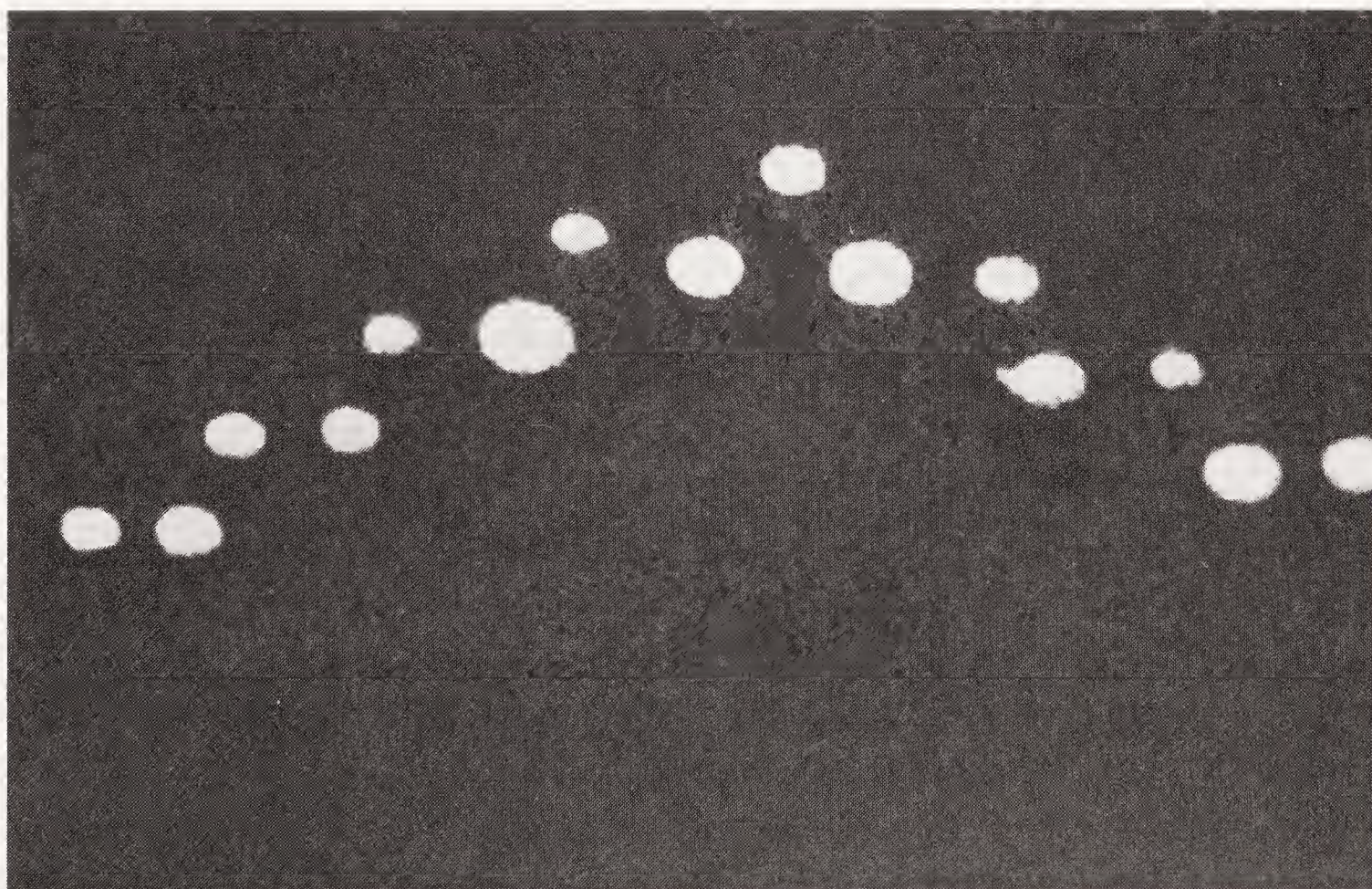
average speed of 60 miles an hour, one duck would appear as large as the entire formations we have been observing.

Among those holding out for birds was a Lubbock area farmer, T. E. Snider, Jr., who said he had seen some ducks flying over a drive-in theater at 9 p.m. on August 31 and briefly reflecting light as they did so. The *Lubbock Morning Avalanche* noted, however, that Snider's theory did not account for the "unbelievable speed reported by others." The next night, after callers flooded the Lubbock newspaper with sightings, reporter Kenneth May suggested, "Quite possibly, some of the persons who think they have seen the strange objects have seen something different from what others have seen. Some persons may have seen birds; others may have seen a light reflection—and others may have seen an altogether strange phenomenon that may never be explained."

**The Hart photographs.** The Lubbock affair took a spectacular turn late on the evening of August 30. At 11:30 p.m., as he lay in bed in an upstairs room of his parents' home, Carl Hart, Jr., a Texas Tech freshman, looked out at the stars through an open window. Suddenly a formation of 18 to 20 white lights in two rows and a perfect V formation came out of the north and crossed the sky, disappearing over the house. Hoping they would return, Hart grabbed his 35-mm Kodak camera and rushed out to the backyard. Within a minute or two the lights passed overhead, and he snapped two pictures. Two minutes later they made a third pass, and he took three more pictures. Hart thought the lights were at a high altitude. In each appearance they were visible for no more than three or four seconds. Two nights later, at the same time, Hart saw two more flights but did not photograph them.

## LUBBOCK LIGHTS

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Mysterious light formations such as these taken by Carl Hart, Jr., appeared repeatedly in the sky over Lubbock, Texas, in the summer and fall of 1951. (Fortean Picture Library)



On the morning of the thirty-first, Hart went to a photo-finishing shop run by a friend, and the two developed the roll. When the pictures turned out remarkably well—Hart had been concerned that they would not because of the objects' relative dimness—the friend called the paper. Soon afterwards Hart dropped off the photos and the negatives at the *Morning Avalanche* office, and managing editor Jay Harris and his chief photographer William Hams examined them carefully, finally deciding to use them—though Harris warned Hart that he would “run him out of town” if they turned out to be hoaxed. Hart was unconcerned. The paper paid him \$10 for use of all four pictures. Harris then decided to put them on the Associated Press wire. Further examination at the AP office in Fort Worth found no evidence of anything questionable.

The photographs were later studied at the physics laboratory of the Air Technical Intelligence Center (ATIC) at Wright-Patterson AFB. According to the laboratory, when three of the photographs were superimposed (the fourth was discarded because it was too blurry),

it was readily apparent that the two rows of spots behaved differently. One row shows only slight variation from a precise ‘V’ formation throughout, whereas the other row appears to pass from above the first row, through it to a position below. The spacings of this second row vary irregularly in the three frames plotted, while the first row holds a fairly precise formation. . . . There is the appearance of two extra spots, outside the regular rows. . . . There is relative movement within the formation of spots, so that they are not lights on a fixed object. . . . Furthermore, it is unlikely that the moving spots are in any kind of straight line.

There was no reason to believe then or now that Hart faked the photographs, which are among the most remarkable in UFO history. In later life he repeatedly stood by them.

One thing they seem not to have been was duck breasts reflecting city lights. One of the first persons to see the photographs, Texas Tech biology department head J. C. Cross, dismissed the possibility as “definitely” out of the question. In an effort to duplicate the images in the Hart pictures, the *Avalanche*'s Hams snapped shots of birds flying above the city's vapor lights at night. The results were images too dim to be reproduced.

Interestingly, the professors said the images Hart caught did not look like what they were seeing: U shapes rather than V shapes. The *Avalanche* noted, not quite accurately since a few sightings were simply of clumps of lights, “All who have seen the lights have said they were in one or another of those shapes.” Still, this assertion seems to have been generally true.

**Grudge investigates.** Official word of the Lubbock situation came to ATIC, which oversaw the Air Force's UFO-investigative operation **Project Grudge** (a few months

later, in March 1952, to be renamed **Project Blue Book**), in late September. Grudge's director, Lt. **Edward J. Ruppelt**, read a report of the initial investigation conducted out of Reese AFB near Lubbock and was struck by the apparent similarity of the Lubbock lights to something else described in a New Mexico report that arrived in the same mail.

At 9:58 p.m. on August 25—the date of the professors' first sighting—Hugh Young, a Sandia Base guard with a high security clearance, observed a strange aircraft from the yard of his trailer home on the east side of Albuquerque, 250 miles from Lubbock. His wife Emily also witnessed the phenomenon: a flying wing one and a half times the wing span of a B-36. As it passed overhead, coming from the north at 300 to 400 mph and at an altitude estimated to be less than 1000 feet, it made no sound. Dark bands ran from the front to the back of the wing, and at its trailing edges six to eight pairs of flowing lights could be seen. Though clearly this was no conventional aircraft, a subsequent investigation established that no planes were in the area at the time of the sighting.

Later Ruppelt was to learn that around dusk one evening in August, Prof. Ducker's wife had seen a huge, soundless flying wing pass over their house. At the time—presumably before the epidemic of lights (neither of the two could recall the exact date of the sighting)—Ducker had not been able to believe her, even though he knew his wife was a calm, sensible woman.

On November 6 Ruppelt flew to Reese AFB and began his investigation of the Lubbock lights in the company of OSI agent Bossartt, interviewing Hart and the professors as well as others who the two thought could be helpful. The professors recounted their effort, largely unsuccessful, to get good scientific data on the lights. On the eighth Ruppelt and an officer from Reese went down to Brownfield, Texas, to read recent UFO reports chronicled in the *Brownfield News*. According to Ruppelt, "These were similar to the Lubbock descriptions of the incident except for one reported by a Mr. Joe Bryant." This remark is curious in light of what Ruppelt made of Bryant's testimony five years later, in his memoir of his Blue Book experiences.

In his official report he relates the following: On the evening of August 25, Bryant, 65, and his wife saw a loose group of lights heading from north to south. They had a "kind of glow" and were a "little bigger than a star." A few minutes later another group flew over, and a few minutes after that, another. The third group, however, circled around the house, and this time Bryant could not only see what they were but also hear them. What they were and what they sounded like were the same: the onomatopoeically named plover. Plovers are white-breasted birds similar to sandpipers except with shorter bills and stouter builds. Bryant remarked to the officers that the next day, when he read the *Morning Avalanche* story on the professors' sighting, he was sure they had seen what he had seen. Ruppelt reports that he and his companion then went to the local library to read about plovers, and when they were done "it was too late to go to Big Spring or Lamessa [sic], Texas, so the officers returned to Lubbock."

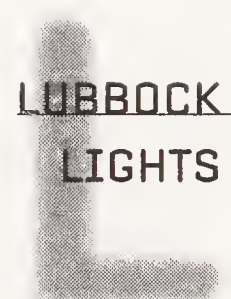


In the later book Bryant has become an “old gentleman, about eighty years old,” and a resident of Lamesa, and now his sighting, far from being different from the “Lubbock descriptions,” is “identical to what the professors described,” an important potential clue to the true identity of the lights. Both Ruppelt’s initial report and subsequent account agree that in the afternoon the two Air Force men spoke with a federal game warden about plovers. The warden said he doubted the birds were responsible for the Lubbock sightings. Though plovers observed from late August through mid-November can be seen migrating south and in groups, those groups seldom comprise more than five or six birds at the most, usually fewer, and their maximum speed is something like 50 mph. Ruppelt’s 1951 report has the warden remarking (in Ruppelt’s paraphrase) that plovers “have been seen in the Lubbock locality recently although not in great numbers.” But in his 1956 book, *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*, Ruppelt avers, the warden “did say that for some unknown reason there were more than the usual number of plovers in the area that fall.”

At the start, when he read the reports at his office at Wright-Patterson, Ruppelt’s working hypothesis had been that the professors may have seen the Albuquerque flying wing. Possibly, moreover, the Albuquerque and Lubbock events were linked with another event, the tracking by two Air Defense Command radar installations of an unidentified target. An F-86 had been sent after the target, which was at 13,000 feet and heading northwest at 900 mph, but the object—apparently never seen visually—suddenly disappeared from the scope. This incident occurred early in the morning of August 26 over Washington state. Ruppelt recalled, “I quickly took out a map of the United States and drew in a course line between Lubbock and the radar station. A UFO flying between these two points would be on a northwesterly heading and the times it was seen at the two places gave it a speed of roughly 900 miles per hour.”

Yet what the professors were reporting were not flying wings but collections of apparently discrete lights—with the one exception of Mrs. Ducker’s sighting, about which, by the time she was interviewed over two and a half months later, she could provide few details, including the crucial one of date. It is tempting to speculate that the date was the twenty-fifth and to hypothesize that her sighting was linked to the Youngs’s. Because of her inability to recall the date, however, this notion is destined forever to remain purely speculative. Nonetheless, in light of another curious fact Ruppelt learned by accident, it is not entirely unreasonable.

As he flew from Lubbock on the ninth, Ruppelt heard an interesting story. He happened to sit next to a retired rancher who lived in Lubbock, and though the Grudge officer did not reveal his identity, nonetheless a conversation between the two, perhaps inevitably, turned to Topic A in Lubbock, the mysterious lights. The ex-rancher told Ruppelt that about 10 minutes before the professors’ first sighting, his wife had gone outdoors to take some sheets off the clothesline. Suddenly she rushed inside, “as white as the sheets she was carrying,” to announce that she had seen an enormous “airplane without a body” glide swiftly and silently overhead.



Pairs of glowing blue lights were visible on the back edge of the wing. To the astonished Ruppelt it sounded as if the woman had seen either the Albuquerque flying wing or something exactly like it.

**Pieces of a puzzle.** In his book Ruppelt declares that the Lubbock lights “weren’t birds, they weren’t refracted light [as suggested by astronomer and UFO debunker **Donald H. Menzel**], but they weren’t spaceships. . . . The lights that the professors saw—the backbone of the Lubbock Lights series—have been positively identified as a very commonplace and easily explainable natural phenomena [sic].”

Unfortunately, the scientist who did the explaining, after setting up instruments and tracking the lights over a period of months, must remain anonymous, he says, and therefore not even his explanation can be reported. (In a subsequent edition of his book Ruppelt would claim that the “Lubbock Lights were night flying moths.”) A clue to the scientist’s identity appears in an undated Blue Book document (circa 1960s), but it also contradicts Ruppelt’s assertion about what the objects were not: “In 1959 Dr. **J. Allen Hynek** contacted one of the professors at Texas Tech regarding [the] case. This professor informed Dr. Hynek that he had conducted an extensive study of the Lubbock sightings and determined that they were definitely [of] birds.”

All things considered, this seems a reasonable explanation—not a perfect one, perhaps, but better than any other yet proposed. It may not apply, however, to Hart’s photographs, which the professors insisted did not depict what they saw. As Ruppelt notes, “The professors had reported soft, glowing lights yet the photos showed what should have been extremely bright lights. Hart reported a perfect formation while the professors, except for the first flight, reported an unordered group. There was no way to explain this disagreement in the arrangement of the lights.”

Possibly Hart did photograph the flying wing. Perhaps the ATIC scientists who thought the lights were different objects, rather than changing light patterns on the bottom of a boomerang-shaped aircraft, were simply wrong. That would mean that genuine UFO sightings were occurring in west Texas and New Mexico in the midst of a spectacular but unrelated IFO episode. The flying-wing reports were of the sorts that underlie the case for UFOs; they were not of amorphous lights, in other words, but of structured craft like nothing nature could produce. As Ruppelt said, even if one eliminated the professors’ Lubbock lights from the equation, what remain are “good UFO reports.”

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See Abduction Phenomenon and Contactees.

## MANTELL INCIDENT

One of the most publicized of early UFO incidents occurred on the afternoon of January 7, 1948. Ironically, it is not certain that it was a "UFO incident" at all. It is certain, however, that in the course of it tragedy occurred: a 25-year-old Kentucky Air National Guard pilot, Capt. Thomas F. Mantell, Jr., died when the F-51 he was flying crashed southwest of Franklin, Kentucky.

At 1:20 p.m. T. Sgt. Quinton Blackwell, a tower operator at Godman Field, the air strip serving Fort Knox in Louisville, took a call from the fort's military police passing on an alert from the Kentucky State Highway Patrol. The highway patrol had said it was receiving reports of an unusual aerial object over Maysville, 80 miles to the east. Godman notified Flight Service at Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio, and asked if there were any aircraft in the vicinity. There were none. A few minutes later the highway patrol called back to say it now had reports from Owensboro and Irvington, where witnesses were describing a westbound circular object 250 to 300 feet in diameter.

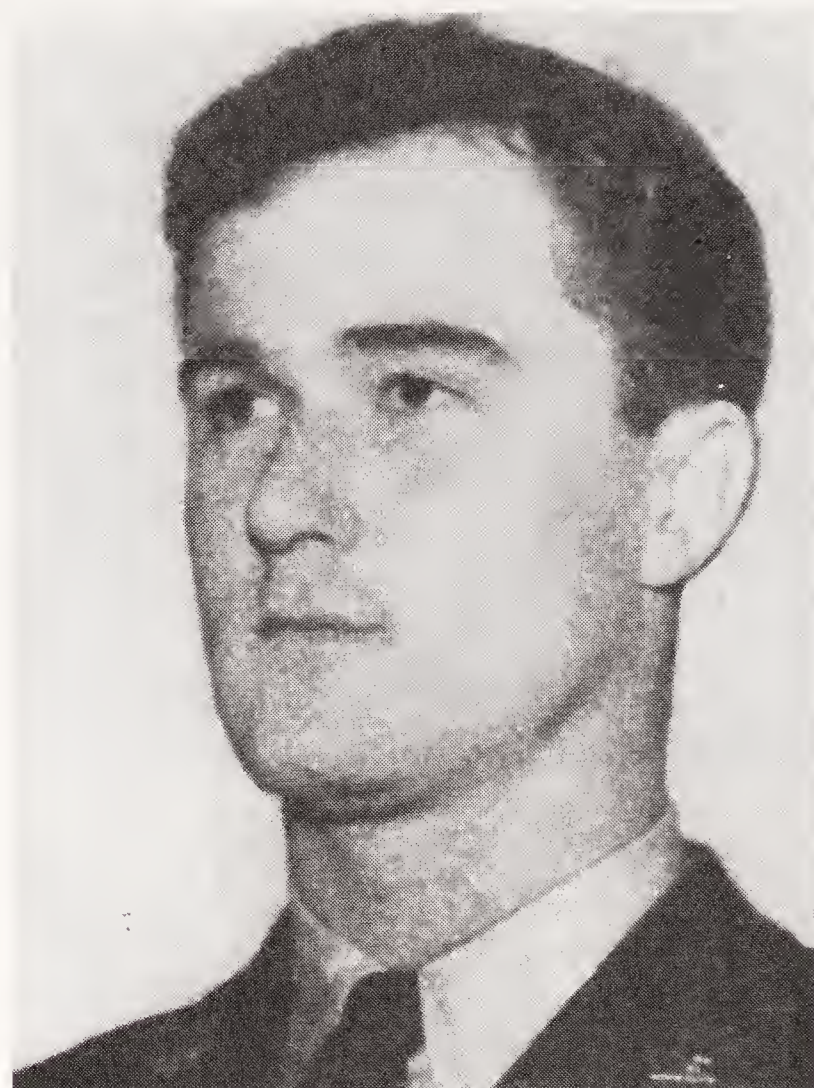


At 1:45 Blackwell looked to the southern sky and saw something out of the ordinary. He quickly notified two others, a private and a lieutenant, who observed a small white object. Others were alerted, including the commanding officer, Col. Guy Hix, and all saw it, characterizing it variously as resembling a "parachute with the bright sun shining on top of the silk," "round and whiter than the clouds that passed in front of it," "an ice cream cone topped with red." Hix said, "It was very white and looked like an umbrella. . . . It appeared about one-fourth the size of the full moon and white in color. Through the binoculars it appeared to have a red border at the bottom at times, a red border at the top at times. It remained stationary, seemingly for one and a half hours."

**The disaster.** As the observers discussed the strange sight, four F-51s approached. Leading the ferry mission—a few days earlier the aircraft had been grounded at Marietta Army Air Base in Georgia and were now being returned to Standiford Air Field in northern Kentucky—was Capt. Mantell, an experienced pilot who had participated in the invasion of Normandy in June 1944. Blackwell asked Mantell and his companions to see if they could get close to the object.

One pilot, whose fuel was running low, continued on to Standiford. Meanwhile, Mantell had spotted the object. He radioed the Godman tower that it was "in sight above and ahead of me, and it appears to be moving at about half my speed or approximately 180 miles an hour." He said, "It appears to be a metallic object or possibly reflection of sun from a metallic object, and it is of tremendous size." He turned right abruptly and climbed sharply, without informing the other two aircraft of his intentions, and they scrambled to catch up with him. At 16,000 feet Mantell's right wingman, 1st Lt. Albert Clements, put on his oxygen mask. Already the air was getting dangerously thin, and Mantell and the left wingman, 2nd Lt. B. A. Hammond, had not brought oxygen masks with them.

Clements and Hammond followed their leader up to 20,000 feet. They were now over Bowling Green, Kentucky, and the other two pilots still weren't sure what



Captain Thomas Mantell, Jr., was killed on January 7, 1948, when he crashed an F-51 Mustang fighter plane while chasing what he took to be a UFO. (Fortean Picture Library)



they were supposed to be looking for. Mantell pointed it out to them: "Look, there it is out there at 12 o'clock!" Clements told investigators, "I was able to discern a bright-appearing object, very small, and so far away [that I was] unable to identify it as to size, shape, color. . . . Its position was slightly lower and to the left of the sun." Clements suggested that they level off, accelerate, and try to get under the object. Mantell replied that he wanted to follow it up to 25,000 feet for 10 minutes; then, if they got no closer to it, they would abandon the chase. It was about 3:15. Around this time Mantell told Godman that the object was "directly ahead of me and slightly above and is now moving at about my speed or better. I am trying to close in for a better look."

At 22,500, with oxygen running low, Clements and Hammond broke off, descended, and resumed the flight to Standiford. Mantell did not respond to Clements's message telling him of their plans, and the last the right wingman saw of him and his aircraft, Mantell was "still climbing almost directly into the sun," Clements recalled.

A minute or two later William C. Mayes, a resident of rural Franklin, "heard a funny noise as if [the pilot] were diving down and pulling up, but [the plane] wasn't, it was just circling. After about three circles the airplane started into a power dive slowly rotating. The plane was so high I could hardly see it when it started down. It started to make a terrific noise, ever increasing, as it descended. It exploded halfway between where it started to dive and the ground. No fire was seen." On a nearby farm Carrie Phillips heard an explosion. She ran to the front window in time to see a plane crash in her front yard 750 feet from the house.

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When Franklin firemen dragged the body of the partially decapitated Mantell from the wreckage, they noticed that his shattered wristwatch was stopped at 3:18. The evening edition of the *Louisville Courier* read: "F-51 and Capt. Mantell Destroyed Chasing Flying Saucer."

At 3:50 the unidentified object disappeared from the view of the observers at Godman tower. By this time Clements had refueled at Standiford and returned to the area to look, without success, for Mantell. Soon afterwards word came of the young pilot's death.

**Other reports.** Sightings of an apparent UFO, or UFOs, continued into the evening. At 7:35 observers at Clinton County Air Base, near Wilmington in southwestern Ohio, saw a light that seemed to be "dancing" up and down and changing color from red to green when suddenly it sped toward the southwest. One witness thought he could detect a faint exhaust trail behind it. Southwest of Clinton, in Columbus, personnel at Lockbourne Tower were seeing a brilliant light trailing an amber-colored exhaust. At one point it descended rapidly until it was close to the ground, hovered there for 10 seconds, then streaked back to its original position. Aside from the consideration that its appearance and behavior ruled out an astronomical body as an explanation, the sky was overcast, and no other celestial bodies were visible.



Other witnesses—to something—included three pilots, two in one aircraft. All estimated that it was at 3000 feet. They described it as a stationary amber light in the west-southwest sky, resembling a “large star or planet.” This object may have been Venus. Possibly it would not have been noticed had the pilots not been alerted to the UFO scare going on elsewhere at the base.

**The solution.** Venus quickly became the official explanation for everything, including Mantell’s “metallic object of tremendous size.” When he became director of **Project Grudge**, **Edward J. Ruppelt** learned that this identification had been offered by a major in the Pentagon, a man who, though without experience in UFO investigation, had been identified as an “expert” and introduced as such to reporters who were clambering for an answer.

In 1952, when an Air Force Intelligence colonel at the Pentagon asked to take a fresh look at the Mantell case, Ruppelt talked with Ohio State University astronomer and Air Force consultant **J. Allen Hynek**, who confessed that he had first suggested the Venus idea to the major. But now, he said, he wished he hadn’t; while Venus was in the same approximate position in the sky as the “UFO” reported at Godman tower and by Mantell, it was for all practical purposes invisible to observers.

Eventually Ruppelt decided that the object responsible for at least the Kentucky sightings was a Skyhook balloon, then part of a secret Navy project about which none of the witnesses would have known. In fact, between 4 and 4:45 the afternoon of the sighting, at least two separate observers in Kentucky and Tennessee had seen what they first took to be a UFO; then, when each had focused a telescope on it, it turned out to be a balloon. Ruppelt studied the wind patterns on the afternoon of January 7, 1948, and decided that the sightings followed the path the Skyhook would have flown.

Unfortunately, he was unable to make a certain identification because he could not locate flight records, though his sources at Wright Field told him they thought the Skyhooks had been launched from Clinton County Air Base (where, as noted above, witnesses saw an object that is as unlikely to have been a balloon as it was Venus). But in later years Grudge’s successor, **Project Blue Book**, claimed it had “determined that on the date of the Godman sighting a balloon was released by the Navy from Clinton County airport in Ohio.”

Though the Skyhook identification is surely correct, the notion that it was launched from Clinton County airport is certainly mistaken. According to Charles B. Moore, who conducted balloon experiments for the government in the late 1940s, no Skyhook flew from the airport before July 9, 1951. An investigation conducted in the early 1990s by ufologists Barry Greenwood and Robert G. Todd identified the balloon as one set off from Camp Ripley, Minnesota, at 8 a.m. on January 6, 1948.

**The legend.** According to Ruppelt, Air Force investigators initially were “convinced that the object Mantell was after was a spaceship and . . . this was the only course they . . . pursued. When the sighting grew older and no spaceship proof could be

found, everybody jumped on the Venus band wagon, as this theory had 'already been established'."

Nonetheless, in a *Saturday Evening Post* article written with Air Force cooperation and reflecting the anti-UFO line then current at Grudge, Sidney Shallett wrote that if Mantell did not die chasing Venus (a claim many viewed as dubious), the culprit was probably a Navy cosmic-ray balloon—a Skyhook in other words. In his January 1950 *True* article **Donald E. Keyhoe** asserted that no balloon could have performed the "lightninglike maneuvers" of the Mantell object, though it is not clear to what maneuvers he is referring. Keyhoe also doubted that Mantell had crashed because he blacked out from lack of oxygen. He quoted an anonymous pilot's verdict: "It looks like a cover-up to me. I think Mantell did just what he said he would—closed in on the thing. I think he either collided with it, or more likely they [the UFO's occupants] knocked him out of the air."

In a follow-up book, *The Flying Saucers Are Real*, Keyhoe contended that the Air Force was withholding significant information about the case, which "might even be the key to the whole flying-saucer riddle." The object Mantell and others saw had to be, in the words of one of Keyhoe's sources, "a huge space ship—perhaps the largest ever to come into our atmosphere."

British writer Harold T. Wilkins suggested that "some lethal ray of immense power and unknown type had been directed at Mantell and his plane by the entities . . . who may have . . . wished to demonstrate to terrestrial military power . . . the folly of any close approach." Comparable rumors and speculations persisted for many years afterwards. Ufologist Leonard H. Stringfield talked with someone who claimed to have spoken with "Mantell's wing man," who said he saw a burst of "what appeared to be tracer" fired at Mantell's F-51. In fact, Clements and Hammond testified at the time that when they last saw Mantell, he was simply ascending.

The Mantell story returned in its most bizarre incarnation in the testimony of Englishman Ernest Arthur Bryant. On April 24, 1965, according to Bryant, a flying saucer landed in the Devonshire village of Scoriton. Three figures dressed in "diving gear" emerged, and one, who appeared to be about 14 years old, identified himself as "Yamski" from "Venus" and mentioned a "Des" or "Les" who "would understand" were he there. (A day earlier **George Adamski**, a leading **contactee**, had died in the United States; his first book was co-written with Irish occultist Desmond Leslie. The clear implication, of course, was that Bryant's space friend was Adamski reborn.) Yamski also said, "One month from today we will bring you proof of Mantell," which turned out, when delivered via a blue light on June 7, to be pieces of an aircraft. Aviation experts determined they were not parts from a F-51. Bryant's story turned out, not surprisingly, to be a fabrication.

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## MARIANA FILM.

→ See Montana Film.

## MARS AND UFOS.

→ See Extraterrestrial Hypothesis and Ufology.

## MARSHALL COUNTY CE2

By any standard the **close encounter** that occurred in the Red River Valley flatlands of far northwestern Minnesota in the early morning hours of August 27, 1979, must be judged one of the most remarkable—and evidential—UFO cases ever recorded. Unlike other potentially important UFO incidents, this one had the good fortune of being fully investigated and documented soon after its occurrence.



Deputy Sheriff Val Johnson, 35, was on duty on the west end of Marshall County, not far from North Dakota and approximately 45 miles south of the Canadian border. Around 1:40 a.m. Johnson, driving on County 5 west of Stephen, saw a light through his side window. The light was to his south, shining from a grove of trees standing alongside Highway 220, which he was approaching. It looked too glaring to be a vehicle headlight. Therefore, he reasoned, it could be from a downed airplane, perhaps one flown by drug smugglers from Canada.

Still, Johnson was not alarmed enough to call in to headquarters in Warren. First he wanted to know with certainty what the light was. He turned south on 220 and accelerated to 65 mph. Now he was close enough to see that, oddly, the light was not illuminating the area or casting shadows. At that instant the light moved toward him, traveling so fast that it crossed the mile and a half separating him and it almost instantaneously. It made no sound, and at even close range it still looked like a blinding light.

"I heard glass breaking and saw the inside of the car light up real bright with white light," he told reporter Jim Durkin the next day. "It was very, very extremely bright. That's all I can remember. . . . After the light hit my vehicle, I don't remember a thing."

When he returned to consciousness, his head was resting on the steering wheel, and his eyes were on the red "ENGINE" light on the dashboard. Lifting his head, he looked out the window and was alarmed to see the car had skidded sideways across the northbound lane and now faced eastward. The front tires were touching the gravel on the shoulder. Johnson could see only with difficulty.

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He radioed headquarters and requested assistance. It was 2:19 a.m. His voice was shaky when he tried to answer the dispatcher's question about what had happened. "I don't know," he said. "Something just hit my car. I don't know how to explain it. Strange. . . . Something attacked my car. I heard glass breaking, and my brakes lock up, and I don't know what the hell happened."

Deputy Greg Winskowski arrived on the scene shortly. Johnson was still inside the car, and when Winskowski opened the door, he saw a red bump on his colleague's forehead, leading him to deduce that Johnson had hit his head against the steering wheel and been knocked unconscious. Winskowski called an ambulance from the Warren hospital.

The ambulance driver thought Johnson appeared to be in a mild state of shock. At the hospital Dr. W. A. Pinsonneault examined his eyes, which had a pinkish irritation on their surface. He was unable to examine them for long, however, because the doctor's probe light hurt so much that Johnson could not stand to be exposed to it for more than a few moments at a time. Pinsonneault likened them to "mild welder's burns" (caused by exposure to intense light) and handed out salve and bandages. Johnson gave a taped statement at the sheriff's office at 5 a.m. and then was driven home.



Sheriff Dennis Brekke, who had come upon the scene of the incident shortly after Winskowski's arrival, drove Johnson's patrol car, a 1977 Ford LTD, to the department garage. The drive was not a simple exercise because the car was damaged in a number of peculiar ways:

The inside headlight on the driver's side was smashed, though not its companion immediately to the left. On the hood, four feet four inches behind the smashed light and close to the windshield, was a flat-bottomed, circular dent, half an inch in diameter. (An investigator who saw it on the twenty-ninth noted, "As the 'creases' in the rear of the dent reveal, the pressure of the blow was delivered primarily downward and toward the windshield.") A crack in the windshield on the driver's side, about a foot and a half behind the dent, ran top to bottom, with four apparent impacts; it looked as if a cluster of small objects, stones perhaps, had done the damage. The car's electric clock, set correctly at 7 p.m. when Johnson came on duty, was 14 minutes late. So, weirdly, was the deputy's wind-up wrist-watch, set at the same time.

Allan Hendry, who saw the car the following day, has described the other damage:

The red plastic lens covering the roof light on the driver's side (2nd from left) shows a triangular puncture, and the lens was dislodged from the housing. Neither the missing piece of plastic nor any foreign debris could be found trapped inside the lamp housing. There is no apparent damage to the housing itself. . . .

[T]he shaft [of a three-foot roof antenna set on a spring-loaded base] has been bent over at a 60-degree angle starting 5 1/2" above the spring. Insect matter can be seen still clinging to the metal (though the shaft is coated quite tenaciously with this tissue material). Oddest of all, the large "bubble" lamp is just inches in front of the antenna, and is virtually the same height as the location of the bend, but it is unscathed. . . .

[The trunk] antenna is identical to the rooftop model. . . . The bend this time is sharper still—90 degrees—and involves only the upper 3 1/2" of the shaft. [There is a] rising angle of incidence from the first bend to the second one; with a 4'7" separation between antennas (horizontally) and an 18" rise in the 2nd bend[;] this results in an 18-degree angle from front to back. This second antenna is for a CB radio. . . . [T]here was no damage to the car's regular telescopic antenna on the front hood. All the damage favored the driver's side of the car. The rear antenna, 2'11" from the left side of the car, is the closest the damage got to the car's centerline.

At 11 a.m. Sheriff Brekke took his deputy, who still had bandages over his eyes, to Grand Forks, North Dakota, for a more comprehensive eye examination by

ophthalmologist Leonard Prochaska. Dr. Prochaska found that Johnson's problems had cleared up. He was not surprised; as he would tell Hendry, it is not unusual for corneal flash burns (usually caused by exposure to strong sources of ultraviolet radiation such as a welder's arc) to heal within hours.

**Investigation and analysis.** That morning the sheriff also phoned the Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS), then headquartered in Evanston, Illinois, and reported the incident. Allan Hendry, CUFOS' full-time investigator, took the call and quickly arranged to fly to the site the next day. Then he called military and civilian aviation facilities in Minnesota and North Dakota to see if any had picked up unusual traffic on radar. None had.

Meanwhile, the Marshall County officers had found shattered pieces of headlight glass next to the milepost sign Johnson was near when the light accelerated in his direction. This seemed to establish that the "collision," if that is what it was, happened slightly over one mile south of the 5/220 intersection. The car traveled some 855 feet before dark skid marks in the pavement indicated that the brakes had locked up. The marks went on for an additional 99 feet before they curved to the east and crossed into the northbound lane. From an experiment with a car similar to the one Johnson had been driving, Brekke concluded that Johnson had been traveling at 48 mph when the skid marks started.

On the twenty-ninth Hendry, Johnson, Brekke, and others scoured the site. Nothing out of the ordinary registered on a Geiger counter. No additional physical evidence was recovered. Hendry determined that the damage was inconsistent with anything an airplane could have caused, and nothing he learned about Johnson's character and reputation led him to suspect the officer of perpetrating a **hoax**—though, as we shall see, one commentator on the case would argue for this explanation of the case.

Meridan French, a windshield expert from the Glass Division of Ford Motor Company, flew to Warren to examine the fractures personally. His report reads in part:

There were four distinct and separate fracture origins. One was on the inboard surface of the inner glass ply and three were on the exterior surface of the outer ply. Because all four origins were at different locations in the windshield, it is concluded that they represent four independent events. From the fracture patterns, however, it appears that the time between at least three events was extremely short, on the order of a few milli-seconds. . . . There was no penetration of the windshield laminate anywhere and no tears in the polyvinyl butyral interlayer. . . . The character of all glass fractures showed them to be the result of mechanical forces rather than thermal stresses. In fact, there was no evidence of unusual heat, either general or localized. . . . None of the four fracture origins were individually unusual, any of which could be artificially reproduced. However, as a group and in combination they are difficult to explain. . . .





. . . . I judge the sequence of events to be as follows:

1. The first fracture was of the inboard ply with the fracture origin at the inside surface. The type of fracture would indicate an impact on the exterior surface of the windshield exactly opposite the fracture point. The impacting object was probably not metallic or stone-like because there was no apparent damage to the exterior surface at the point of impact. I would estimate the impacting object to be very firm, perhaps even hard, with a mass velocity sufficient to produce a relatively high (10,000 to 12,000 psi), highly localized stress. Examples of object types could range from a softball, baseball, or golfball to a rubber-headed hammer. Such a failure could also have been made with a blow from the side of a tightly closed fist.

In a laminated glass impact failure as described here, it is not unusual for the glass ply opposite the impact to fail while the impacted plate does not. Glass failure always originates at a defect or point of damage, and it often happens that the plate opposite the impact is the weaker of the two in the highly stressed impact area.

2. The second failure to occur was in the outer glass ply at a point approximately 0.9" below the first origin. The fracture is horizontal and forms a point of tangency between two circular crack patterns, one above the other. Failure originated on the outside surface from a relatively low level bending stress for which there are several possibilities:

Localized loading or pushing on the glass from the inside. This is unlikely because of the limited space between the glass and the padded cowl at the origin location.

Positive pressure inside the car which would bend the windshield outward.

Negative pressure outside the car which would achieve the same effect.

Localized inward bending of the glass by a relatively small impacting object for the first fracture would have caused a tensile bending stress in the outboard surface in the area of the second failure. This is the most plausible in view of the circular crack pattern above the second fracture origin.

3. The third fracture also originated on the outside surface about 1.0" below the second origin. In this case, the glass is severely crushed in a small, roughly circular area as though impacted by an extremely hard object but without sufficient force to cause additional cracking of the inner glass opposite the point of impact. There was no visible residue from the impacting object in the crushed glass area when examined closely with a 20x magnifier.

4. The fourth fracture origin was also on the exterior of the windshield, approximately 5.5" above the point of the second failure. This is also a bending stress failure oriented horizontally but is believed to be a secondary failure originating at a crack from an earlier failure.

5. There is also a band of very fine fractures several inches long with some degree of glass crushing, running almost vertically and just to the passenger side of the four principle [sic] fracture origins. This last cracking is all in the outboard ply, and I believe it to be a completely secondary fracture system probably resulting from normal flexing or cracking of the already broken windshield in moving the car after the original incident.

Even after several days of reflection on the crack patterns and apparent sequence of fractures, I still have no explanation for what seem to be inward and outward forces acting almost simultaneously. I can only [conclude] . . . that all cracks were from mechanical forces of unknown source.

About the dent in the hood, French observed that evidently "some 1/2" diameter, flat-ended object made forceful impact with the hood at that location and then tilted toward the windshield. It may even have been the source of the windshield impacts."

A team of engineers at the materials testing laboratory at Honeywell, Inc., Minneapolis, studied the two antennas, the glass pieces from the headlight, and the punctured plastic lens from the rooftop lamp. The engineers' analysis indicated that "flying particles" (such as rocks or stones) were responsible for the damage to the headlight glass and lamp plastic. But the bends in the antennas required mechanical forces uniformly applying several pounds of pressure. Other tests for magnetism or radiation produced no anomalous readings.

**A hoax?** By the time Hendry arrived in Warren, local people were urging Johnson to undergo hypnosis and see if he could "recall" what happened during the sighting's missing 40 minutes. Evidently some were speculating that he may have been abducted by a UFO. Johnson had no interest in the idea, and he also rejected suggestions that he take a polygraph test. As far as he was concerned, neither would accomplish anything besides satisfying other people's "morbid curiosity." His employers and his friends were sticking by him, and all he wanted to do was go on with his life. He turned down all invitations to appear on television, though he would change his mind and consent to a September 11 appearance on ABC television's *Good Morning, America* with Hendry.

In the absence of any direct evidence that Johnson had hoaxed the incident, Philip J. Klass, a fierce critic of the UFO phenomenon, argued the case by innuendo and buttressed it with sarcasm. In his view there were only two possible explanations: either the episode was a hoax, or "malicious UFOnavts" had hit the



headlight, hood, and windshield with a “hammerlike device,” gently bent the antennas, then set the clock and watch back 14 minutes. In other words, the alternative explanation—at least as Klass expressed it—was too absurd to be considered; therefore the incident must be a hoax.

Besides, Klass argued, Johnson’s refusal to undergo a polygraph examination was suspicious. Debating Hendry at the Smithsonian Institution in September 1980, he claimed that “Deputy Val Johnson . . . likes to play practical jokes, especially in the late evening when he gets a little bored, as *I* learned . . . by talking to some of the people who have worked with him and know him very well.”

It is hard to imagine by what definition the infliction of serious damage to a police car qualifies as a “practical joke.” In a book published two years later, Klass cited as “evidence” a former co-worker’s testimony that Johnson “did like to pull tricks on a guy once in a while . . . like maybe hide your coffee cup on you.” This was the most damning charge Klass succeeded in uncovering, and even here his informant said, “I don’t know if you’d call him a ‘practical-joker’. . . . As far as we know, he’s never told us any untruths.”

**Similar cases.** Almost exactly two days after the Marshall County close encounter—but hours before the story hit the press—Russ Johnson (not related to Val Johnson) was traveling on Highway 50 on the western outskirts of Vermillion, South Dakota, at 2 a.m. August 29, when he spotted what he took to be a single blinding headlight ahead of him. It was stationary for only two seconds; then it streaked toward him and in two seconds had engulfed his car. He closed his eyes and hit the brakes. His car skidded to a stop, spinning sideways across the road until—like Val Johnson’s vehicle—it faced east. Opening his eyes, he watched the light heading toward the west. It angled upward slightly before it disappeared.

When Johnson notified the police immediately afterwards, they in turn alerted Prof. Robert Adams of the nearby University of South Dakota. Adams spoke with the witness half an hour after the event. The next day he went to the site with the still-shaken Johnson and saw the skidmarks.

When Val Johnson’s story became known, other Warren County residents came forward to detail their own recent UFO sightings. One night in mid-August Jon Linnell and his wife, on their way home from Northwood, North Dakota, to Warren, “saw bright lights over a field to my left,” Linnell said. “The light stayed in the same spot above the trees. . . . 15 seconds later the thing came at us. . . . It scared me. My wife said, ‘It’s going to hit us.’ It came and hovered on top of us so we couldn’t see what it was. We couldn’t see the outline of it. When I’d almost stopped the car, it took a 180-degree turn and took off north. There were too many lights for a plane and there was no sound. When you tried to see what it was, it hurt your eyes.”

Val Johnson said he had received three calls from individuals who stated they had seen a bright light in the sky the night of his experience. In one instance,

a farmer near Oslo (Johnson's hometown, just a few miles south of the encounter site) told him that—in Johnson's words—"a large light hovered over their farm bright enough to turn off his mercury yard light." Also "a bright light swooped down on a truck driver in the middle of the night," and "one woman said a bright light passed over her farmstead and the electricity and television went out." None of these reports, unfortunately, was investigated.

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## MAURY ISLAND HOAX.

→ See Hoaxes and Men in Black.

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James E. McDonald was born on May 7, 1920, in Duluth, Minnesota. He earned a B.A. at the University of Omaha in 1942, an M.S. at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1945, and a Ph.D. at Iowa State University in 1951. After a year-long stint at the University of Chicago, he joined the staff of the Institute of Atmospheric Physics, University of Arizona. He later resigned to devote himself full-time to teaching at the university and to research.

McDonald's particular professional interest was cloud physics, but his wide-ranging curiosity led him to explore other areas of science. He also took a keen interest in social and political issues. He was an active figure in the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and the American Meteorological Society.

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On January 10, 1954, while driving through the Arizona desert with three companions, including two other meteorologists, McDonald had a UFO sighting. He reported the incident soon afterwards to the Air Force. The experience did not—then—change his life, but it planted questions in his mind and added UFOs to a long list of personal interests. In 1958 he started quietly investigating Arizona sightings, and around that time he began a low-profile association with the Washington-based **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP).

In the wake of a much-publicized March 1966 sighting wave in Michigan, McDonald wrote Tom Malone, chairman of the NAS Committee on the Atmospheric Sciences (CAS), and urged that a small panel be set up under the auspices of NAS, CAS, or some other scientific body; while avoiding publicity, it would be given access to **Project Blue Book** and other government/military files. He also wrote his local congressman, Rep. Morris Udall, about the idea, asking him to pass on his letter in confidence to Gerald R. Ford, Michigan congressman and House minority leader, who had just asked the Armed Services Committee to investigate the Air Force's handling of the events in Michigan.

McDonald hoped to participate in such a panel, but the idea was shelved as the Air Force indicated it was going to commission the independent study that would later become known as the **University of Colorado UFO Project** (informally called the Condon Committee after its director, physicist Edward U. Condon). Panel or no, however, by now McDonald was determined to pursue his own UFO study over the summer. He secured a small amount of money from the Office of Naval Research (ONR) to examine the Blue Book material at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio. ONR thought that certain kinds of clouds could account for some radar trackings of unidentified targets.

The Wright-Patterson research convinced McDonald of what he already suspected: that the Air Force had mostly done a lousy job of investigating sightings and that UFO reports constituted evidence of extraterrestrial visitation. Another conviction was that as the Air Force's scientific consultant for nearly two decades, astronomer **J. Allen Hynek** should have long ago alerted his colleagues to the importance of the UFO phenomenon. Instead he had towed the Air Force line and only now was showing signs of wanting to break free.

On June 8, 1966, when McDonald met Hynek at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, he launched into a heated attack. Hynek associate Jacques Vallee, who was there, argued that if Hynek had spoken out "last year," the Air Force would have dumped him. McDonald retorted that he did not care about last year; Hynek ought to have spoken up in 1953. Though Vallee soon came to dislike McDonald, he was impressed that day, noting in his journal, "This man has many contacts, many ideas, and he is afraid of nothing."

**The crusade.** From then on McDonald devoted virtually all of his professional energy both to UFO investigations and to a crusade to convince his scientific col-

leagues—as well as politicians, journalists, and other opinion-makers—of the seriousness of the phenomenon.

McDonald also interacted with the Air Force in an effort to influence the direction of the proposed project and to see to it that personnel who understood the nature of the UFO problem were appointed to it. The Air Force, however, quickly identified McDonald as an enemy whom, as an internal memo put it, it needed to “fireproof.” The project, as soon would become clear, would not be, nor was it ever intended to be, a truly independent, objective inquiry; it was part of an elaborate ruse by which the Air Force could rid itself of its long-standing public-relations predicament. Virtually from the onset of the Air Force’s overture to the University of Colorado, in August 1966, there was never any doubt that the project would reinforce the Air Force’s negative conclusions.

McDonald laid plans to go public with his pro-UFO sentiments in October. On the first of that month, McDonald wrote Thomas Ratchford of the Air Force Office of Scientific Research (AFOSR) to tell him that he would soon speak out for radical changes in the handling of UFO reports.

McDonald’s first public statements were made to newspaper reporters in Tucson on October 4 and to the University of Arizona department of meteorology colloquium the next day. His colleagues responded negatively, and to one of them, McDonald acknowledged the precariousness of his position. “That publicly espousing such an hypothesis [the **extraterrestrial hypothesis**,] even in the pussyfooting language of ‘least undesirable hypothesis’, is professionally risky, is very clear to me,” he wrote. Nonetheless, the university’s Space Sciences Committee gave him a \$1300 grant toward his research expenses.

On October 7 the Air Force announced that Dr. Condon, former director of the National Bureau of Standards and former president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), would head the Air Force-funded project at the University of Colorado. The announcement, coming just days before McDonald’s scheduled lecture to the American Meteorological Society meeting in Washington, D.C., which he hoped would attract national attention, reduced the impact of McDonald’s words. As one scholarly observer would remark, this “seems more than coincidental.”

In any event, McDonald spoke bluntly to his colleagues about the inadequacy of the investigations to date and the responsibility of scientists to address the “very interesting possibility that these aerial objects may be some type of extraterrestrial probes”:

My study of past official Air Force investigations . . . leads me to describe them as *completely superficial* [McDonald’s emphases]. They have, for at least the past dozen years, been carried out at a *very low level of scientific competence* as a very low-priority task (one of about 200 within the Foreign Technology Division, Wright-Patterson AFB).

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Officially released “explanations” of important UFO sightings have often been almost absurdly erroneous. In only a few instances has there been any on-the-spot field investigation by [Blue Book] personnel, and much of that has been quite superficial. On the other hand, official press releases, statements to Congress, etc., have conveyed an impression of expertise and investigative thoroughness that has led both the public and the scientific community at large to accept the conclusion that no significant scientific problem exists with respect to UFOs. This impression has, of course, been enhanced by journalistic fun-poking and by the dismaying actions of many cultist groups. It seems to me to be important to secure much more extensive scientific study of the UFO problem, preferably involving not only the Air Force, but other more scientifically oriented agencies. That the official Air Force position has for over fifteen years been one of public assurance of no UFO hostility argues the reasonableness of turning over substantial portions of the UFO investigative problem to science-oriented federal agencies in the near future. The recently announced “university teams” program is a laudable step forward. Much more effort seems warranted, and agencies such as NASA and NSF [National Science Foundation] should participate actively in the task of rapid clarification of the long-standing confusion over the UFO problem. The work of independent organizations such as the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (whose efforts impress me as much more thorough and open-minded than those of Project Bluebook [sic]) should be exploited and incorporated into all future studies.

At first McDonald judged Condon a good choice to head the project (for a short time McDonald even hoped he would be its principal investigator), but his enthusiasm was short-lived, as evidence of key personnel’s disdain for the subject—as well as Condon’s antipathy to McDonald’s efforts—quickly came to light. In the meantime McDonald continued his one-scientist crusade, speaking to as many scientific and professional societies as he could get invitations to. He also interviewed hundreds of witnesses and sought other data bearing on the sightings. The results of these investigations were incorporated into his lectures and papers.

He also prepared scathing criticisms not only of Blue Book but of civilian debunkers such as Harvard University astronomer **Donald H. Menzel**, author of two anti-UFO books, and *Aviation Week and Space Technology* editor Philip J. Klass. In time McDonald and Hynek would become occasional public allies, but neither ever fully trusted the other. The two could hardly have been less alike. McDonald was fiery, aggressive, and impatient, Hynek cautious, low-key, and nonconfrontational.

His problems with Hynek aside, McDonald found allies among the small number of scientists willing to take UFOs seriously, and he also worked with civilian ufologists whom he deemed serious and rational. He found a sympathetic listener

in United Nations Secretary General U Thant, who arranged for a McDonald lecture before the UN's Outer Space Affairs Group on June 7, 1967.

Where the Condon Committee was concerned, McDonald sensed a disaster in the making. As early as January 1967 Condon was saying publicly that the government ought to "get out of this business. . . . [T]here is nothing to it, but I'm not supposed to reach a conclusion for another year." Alarmed, McDonald lobbied NAS president Frederick Seitz with tactful criticisms of the project and then with explicit suggestions for a UFO-research panel. He also exchanged letters with some lower-level project personnel whose research, he learned, was leading them to a sympathetic view of UFOs. But in August, when he went personally to the Colorado campus in Boulder, he found Condon distant and unresponsive; as if to make his feelings manifestly clear, Condon fell asleep twice during McDonald's briefing.

McDonald was disheartened to learn that Condon had no interest in doing field investigations or interviews himself. McDonald learned that disenchantment with Condon and project coordinator Robert J. Low was growing among committee staffers. Throughout 1967 Condon continually made disparaging references to UFOs, peppering his talks with anecdotes about **hoaxes**, **contactees**, and other ephemera.

By letter and phone McDonald discussed with pro-UFO committee staffers David Saunders and Norman Levine longer-term, post-committee plans by which the scientific study of UFOs could be pursued. McDonald understood that federal agencies were waiting to see what the project's conclusions would be before they committed themselves. A negative conclusion would dash McDonald's hope that NASA would involve itself in UFO research. Should that happen, McDonald suggested a professional scientific organization that could fund research and publish a journal.

In July 1967 committee investigator Roy Craig came upon a letter Low had written on August 9, 1966, when the Air Force and the university were considering the possibility of a project. In the letter, addressed to two deans, Low weighed the pros and cons. In urging a positive decision, he suggested a way in which the university could manage an association with UFOs while retaining its good name among those who mattered:

The trick would be, I think, to describe the project so that, to the public, it would appear a totally objective study but, to the scientific community, would present the image of a group of nonbelievers trying their best to be objective but having an almost zero expectation of finding a saucer.

Craig showed the memo to Levine, who then presented it to Saunders. In common with some other project investigators, Saunders was on cordial terms with NICAP, which was actively aiding the committee. He sent a copy to NICAP director **Donald E. Keyhoe**. Saunders knew the letter expressed Low's true feelings toward the subject. In due course Keyhoe passed a copy of the memo on to McDonald.

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Low knew nothing of this until early February 1968, when McDonald wrote him a seven-page letter outlining criticisms of the project's methodology. In the course of this communication, he quoted from the memo. Low was furious, and so was Condon when Low informed him. The next morning Condon fired Saunders and Levine. On February 24 administrative assistant Mary Lou Armstrong also resigned.

In a phone call to the University of Arizona president, Condon charged that McDonald had "stolen" the letter from committee files. Condon wrote McDonald and called him "treacherous" and "disloyal." Articles on the affair appeared in *Science* and *Look*. Condon would never forgive McDonald, who by this time saw Condon as an obstacle to real UFO research.

McDonald tried to get the NAS involved, but Seitz, a former student of Condon's, resisted. Seitz also refused to reveal to McDonald the names of the 11 scientists who would review the Condon report for the NAS. McDonald had wanted to present them with a critique of the project.

The Boulder furor caught the attention of Indiana Congressman J. Edward Roush, who in a speech on the House floor said the *Look* story raised doubts about the project's scientific integrity. Urged on by McDonald (whom he had gone to meet in Tucson in February 1967), Roush hoped to generate a congressional investigation. On July 29, 1968, five scientists and engineers (McDonald, Hynek, Carl Sagan, James A. Harder, and Robert M. L. Baker) and a sociologist (Robert L. Hall) spoke before the House Science and Astronautics Committee; others submitted prepared statements. Toward the conclusion of a long statement, addressed as much to the larger scientific community as to members of the House committee, McDonald said:

[My] position is that UFOs are entirely real and we do not know what they are, because we have laughed them out of court. The possibility that these are extraterrestrial devices, that we are dealing with surveillance from some advanced technology, is a possibility I take very seriously.

I reach that hypothesis, as my preferred hypothesis, not by hard fact, hardware, tailfins, or reading license plates, but by having examined hundreds of cases and rejected the alternative hypothesis as capable of accounting for them.

When the Condon report was released, in January 1969 under the title *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects*, with—to no one's surprise—negative conclusions, McDonald—also to no one's surprise—emerged as its most forceful critic. He battled to get access to the photocopied Blue Book materials the project had used, but the ever vengeful Condon saw to it that they were destroyed. An even bigger defeat came when the NAS panel endorsed the Condon report.

**The conflict.** From the early 1950s on, the most committed scientist-critic of UFO reports was Donald Menzel. As fiercely opinionated as McDonald, Menzel, one of the nation's leading scientists, probably had as much as anyone to do with establish-

ment science's stand-offish approach to the UFO phenomenon. Those who might have disputed his view that UFO reports are explainable as natural phenomena and hoaxes kept their silence. As an astronomer was to write many years later, "Menzel was . . . prone to vendettas against those he disagreed with."

He disagreed with McDonald, but McDonald, unintimidated, not only ripped into Menzel's proposed solutions for specific UFO sightings but called into question the astronomer's scientific competence. Menzel fought back with bitter denunciations of McDonald, whom he characterized as a pseudoscientist with "absurd" views.

If Menzel and his rhetorical methods were by now familiar to anyone monitoring the UFO controversy, no one, least of all McDonald, was prepared for the man who one day would assume the mantle of premier UFO debunker. Philip J. Klass, an aviation journalist by profession and electrical engineer by education, entered the UFO controversy with an article in the August 22, 1966, issue of *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, of which he was also a senior editor. Another article in the same vein appeared in the October 3 issue.

At first Klass did not appear to be a debunker in the Menzelian sense. To Menzel all UFO reports arise from misperceptions, delusions, fabrications, and witness naiveté about atmospheric phenomena. Klass, however, held that some UFOs are indeed extraordinary, scientifically interesting phenomena. These UFOs are plasmas—small clouds of electrified air, of which ball lightning is one particularly dramatic example. In two magazine articles and a book Klass took this hypothesis to remarkable lengths, going so far as to incorporate it into the **Socorro CE2/CE3** and the **Hill abduction case**.

As McDonald—and later a panel of plasma physicists assembled by the Condon Committee—demonstrated, Klass was out of his depth. McDonald, whose professional expertise was precisely in those areas Klass was writing about, pointed to numerous examples of Klass's "failure to understand rather elementary physical principles" and to the considerable disparity between what plasmas look like and what UFO witnesses report.

Klass's plasma-UFO theory had no support from plasma physicists. Klass quietly abandoned it to move on to a more classic debunking posture in which hoax charges would occupy much of the rhetorical territory once claimed by ball lightning and coronal discharges. But even as he was losing the scientific argument, Klass moved the conflict with McDonald to a new and unexpected front.

In late June 1967 McDonald went to Australia, financed by a small grant from ONR, to do cloud-physics research. Earlier that month, in a memo to Low, he said he planned also to do some UFO investigating and lecturing. That December, Low apparently sent Klass a copy of the letter without informing McDonald. On his return McDonald talked about his UFO work. He also complained that some news accounts in Australian media had falsely claimed that he was there to investigate UFOs for the ONR.

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But other statements McDonald made in communications with James Hughes, his ONR project monitor, make it clear that at least some ONR funds went to McDonald's UFO research. In December Klass launched a letter-writing campaign directed at Navy bureaucrats involved in research funding. He wanted to know "who had funded McDonald's UFO investigations in Australia and also who would fund his upcoming trip to Europe and the USSR." How, Klass asked, could McDonald claim to be doing atmospheric research in the face of his repeated assertion that (1) he was working on UFOs "full-time" and (2) UFOs are not atmospheric phenomena? In this last regard Klass continually cited McDonald's rejection of Klass's plasma theories.

Klass's campaign continued in one form or another for some 18 months, though after an audit of his work ONR noted that it was aware of McDonald's UFO work and had no objection to it. Nonetheless, McDonald lost ONR support for future contracts, apparently because ONR feared that Klass would write an article on the episode for the powerful *Aviation Week*.

On another front Klass issued periodic, heavily italicized broadsides, numbered JEM-1, JEM-2, and so on, whose intent was to raise questions about McDonald's consistency, logic, knowledge, and even honesty. By judicious use of statements culled from *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, Klass clearly implied that McDonald was not only a liar but a habitual one.

**The tragedy.** McDonald pursued his campaign with unflagging energy through 1969 and 1970. He planned to take a sabbatical and write a book in which he would refute Condon and lay out the scientific case for UFOs. The investigations went on as before, as did the lobbying of fellow scientists and the conflicts with debunkers. In late 1969 he spoke at a AAAS symposium on UFOs—a gathering his old antagonist Condon had attempted to squelch (see **American Association for the Advancement of Science UFO Symposium**)—and delivered what in retrospect would be his major statement on the UFO phenomenon. Titled "Science in Default," it remains one of the most powerful scientific defenses of UFO reality ever mounted.

At the same time it was becoming ever more apparent that the price McDonald had known he would pay was a high one indeed. Professionally he was isolated, seen by his conservative colleagues as a fanatic, though none could claim his knowledge of the subject or begin to match his investigative experience. His message that science had neglected "the greatest scientific problem of our times" was not one many of his colleagues wanted to hear.

Besides the professional toll, there was a personal one: a disintegrating marriage. His appearance in Congress marked the end of the public McDonald. After that the plunge into a private hell was fast and steep.

In the spring of 1971, McDonald shot himself in the head. The shot did not kill him, but it left him blind. He was committed to the psychiatric ward of the V.A. Medical Center in Tucson. In June he signed himself out.

On the morning of Sunday, June 13, Frank and Carolyn Flores and their children, walking along a small, shallow creek in semirural south Tucson, found a body of a man under a bridge. A .38 caliber revolver rested in the sand to the left of his head. Officers from the Pima County Sheriff's Department arrived shortly afterwards. Papers on the body identified the dead man as James E. McDonald. A suicide note tersely noted the particular domestic development that led to the decision to end his life.

Four of McDonald's scientific colleagues at the university later prepared a statement of appreciation for their lost friend. It concluded with these words:

Dr. McDonald was a man of integrity and great courage. He was loved and admired by a great many people, he was respected by everyone who stopped to listen, he made a lasting impact on many facets of the atmospheric sciences and society, and he will be missed much more than we now realize.

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## MCMINNVILLE PHOTOS

**A**round 7:30 p.m. on May 11, 1950, as Mrs. Paul Trent, who lived on a farm nine miles from McMinnville, Oregon, was returning to the house after feeding rabbits caged in the backyard, she saw a slow-moving, metallic disc-shaped object heading in her direction from the northeast. She called to her husband, who was inside, and he came out and observed the object for a few moments before rushing back in to grab a camera.

Trent snapped a picture, quickly rewound the film, and took one more photograph as the object, 20 to 30 feet in diameter, turned west, gathering speed. Mrs. Trent saw her father- and mother-in-law on the back porch of their home 400 feet west of the younger Trents's. She called to them, but when they gave no indication of having heard her, she ran inside to phone them. Hearing the ring, the elder Mrs. Trent went into her house to answer the phone and thus missed seeing the UFO. Her husband, however, glimpsed it as it disappeared in the western sky.

The UFO was shaped like a flat-bottomed disc with a sort of superstructure. Years later the Trents told investigator William Hartmann that it resembled a "good-sized parachute canopy without the strings, only silvery-bright mixed with bronze." One of the photographs showed the object tipped up, exposing its underside. At



that moment the witnesses felt a breeze that they associated with the object's action. They thought the UFO was "something the Army was experimenting with."

The Trents did not immediately process the film, but Paul Trent mentioned the incident to his banker, Frank Wortmann, and the pictures were put on display in the bank window. The same day Wortmann first saw the photos, a local newspaper reporter, Bill Powell, persuaded the Trents to loan him the negatives, which the Trent children were playing with.

Powell examined the negatives for evidence of tampering and found none. On June 8 his story, accompanied by blow-ups of the pictures, was published in the *McMinnville Telephone Register*. On the tenth, the International News Service circulated their story and photographs around the world. *Life* borrowed the negatives from Powell and published the pictures in its June 26 issue. The Trents appeared on a national television show, *We the People*. They were promised the returned negatives after the program but did not get them. *Life* said it had misplaced them.



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PHOTOS

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Paul Trent took this photograph of a UFO over his Oregon farm on May 11, 1950. (Fortean Picture Library)



Despite intense scrutiny and investigation as a possible hoax, Trent's UFO photographs remain unexplained. (Fortean Picture Library)

They were found 17 years later in the files of United Press International, which had bought out INS. The negatives had been loaned to William Hartmann, who was investigating the case for the **University of Colorado UFO project** (usually known as the Condon Committee), an Air Force-sponsored study headed by physicist Edward U. Condon. The negatives were then given back to UPI. In 1970, at the Trents's behest, Philip Bladine, editor of the *McMinnville News Register* (formerly the *Telephone Register*), asked UPI to return the negatives, since the Trents had never been paid for them. UPI obliged, but Bladine neglected to inform the couple.

Five years later optical physicist and ufologist Bruce Maccabee located them in the *Register's* files when he began his own reinvestigation. "In retrospect," Maccabee remarked, "it is probably a good thing that the negatives were 'lost' between 1950 and 1967 because they were reasonably well protected during this time, and therefore the photographic information was only minimally degraded."

The Trents said that in the weeks after their sighting, they were visited by representatives of the Air Force and FBI and asked many questions. Powell confirmed at least part of the story to Maccabee, saying that two weeks to a month after the original newspaper account, a plainclothes Air Force agent who "had the paper to do it" showed up at the *Register* office and demanded the pictures, which he never returned even after Powell sent registered letters and telegrams to the Air Force.

The pictures attracted attention because, unlike many claimed UFO photographs, they depicted not nebulous lights but an artificial, structured aircraft—an aircraft, moreover, unlike any possessed then or since by terrestrial agencies. Consequently, investigators faced a stark choice: either the photos were faked by





the Trents, or they were authentic; if authentic, they comprised significant evidence for the reality of intelligently controlled UFOs.

To the discomfort of skeptics, investigators could not find a single local person who doubted the Trents's sincerity. In fact, some remarked privately that the Trents did not possess the intellectual capacity to pull off a successful **hoax**. The couple received no money for their photos, nor is there any evidence that they ever sought any. In common with everyone else who met them in person, Condon Committee investigator Hartmann remarked on their obvious sincerity. He wrote, "This is one of the few UFO reports in which all factors investigated, geometric, psychological, and physical[,] appear to be consistent with the assertion that an extraordinary flying object, silvery, metallic, disk-shaped, tens of meters in diameter, and evidently artificial, flew within sight of two witnesses."

Subsequently, however, two debunkers, Philip J. Klass and Robert Sheaffer, pointed to shadows on the eaves of the garage, depicted in the lefthand corner of the photographs, as evidence that the pictures had been taken in the morning rather than the evening. Neither of the debunkers could provide a plausible explanation as to why the Trents would have lied about this; in any case, Maccabee found that the cloud conditions in the area that evening could have produced the effect.

As late as 1990 the Trents were sticking by their story.

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## MEIER CONTACT CLAIMS.

→ See **Contactees** and **Hoaxes**.

## MENGER CONTACT CLAIMS.

→ See **Hoaxes** and **Sex and UFOs**.



In the midst of a religious revival in Wales, a young rural woman was visited three nights in succession by a “man dressed in black,” the *Barmouth Advertiser* reported on March 30, 1905. “This figure has delivered a message to the girl which she is frightened to relate.”

The revival owed its inspiration to the charismatic Mary Jones, a 38-year-old farmwife and recent convert to ardent Christian faith, who had quickly become a preacher of exceptional power and persuasiveness. Those who accompanied her in her travels through the Welsh countryside noted that mysterious lights seemed to accompany her. This aspect of her ministry was widely remarked on in press accounts—not surprisingly, because journalists saw the lights, too. Since the lights also appeared in places where Mrs. Jones did not happen to be, the association between the lights and her was most likely coincidental. Wales apparently was undergoing what decades later would be called a UFO wave.

The Welsh landscape of early 1905 was rife with supernatural manifestations. Persons affected by the revival reported encounters with Jesus, angels, and demonic black dogs. Satan, too, was met on dark country roads. Perhaps the men in black were his agents, and as dependent on the imagination of the beholder as the other denizens of heaven and hell “seen” by the faithful and the fervent.

Men in black had already been associated with the devil for several centuries. As William Woods writes of medieval encounters in *A History of the Devil* (1973), “Sometimes the devil wears green or gray, but mostly he is dressed in black, and always in the fashion of the day.” In 1730 a 13-year-old Norwegian girl told clerical witch-hunters that six years earlier she and her grandmother had flown on the back of a pig to attend a meeting with Satan. On the way, the clerics wrote in their report of the interrogation, “they met three men dressed in black whom the grandmother referred to as ‘grandfather’s boys.’” Once arrived at their destination, they “went in and sat down at table next to the devil, whom her grandmother called ‘grandfather.’” “Three men dressed in black” would be heard of again, in a whole new context, over two centuries later.

**Albert Bender and the men in black.** In the summer of 1947, as “flying saucers” entered public consciousness, a man named Harold Dahl reported that he had observed a UFO as it discharged metallic substances into the ocean water between Tacoma and Maury Island, Washington. The following morning, he claimed, a stranger clad in a dark suit invited him to breakfast in downtown Tacoma, then startled him by reciting a detailed account of Dahl’s experience of the previous day, even though at that point it had received no publicity. The stranger then intimated that Dahl and his family would be harmed if he discussed his sighting with anyone else.

Subsequent investigation by the Air Force elicited confessions from Dahl and associate Fred L. Crisman that the two had engineered a fantastic **hoax**.

Nonetheless, some civilian investigators refused to credit the retraction and charged that the truth about what would be called the “Maury Island mystery” was being covered up. The legend would live on among uncritical flying-saucer enthusiasts. It would mark the first claimed appearance of a man in black in a UFO-era context, though the concept of “men in black” would not be formed until a few years later.

The International Flying Saucer Bureau (IFSB), which came into being in April 1952 under the direction of Albert K. Bender of Bridgeport, Connecticut, was the most successful early UFO organization. Within months of its creation the IFSB had branches in other countries, an active investigations unit, and a magazine, *Space Review*. But in the fall of 1953 Bender’s ardent pursuit abruptly ended. Soon afterwards Bender wrote in *Space Review*, “The mystery of the flying saucers is no longer a mystery. The source is already known, but any information about this is being withheld by orders from a higher source.” He urged UFO enthusiasts to “please be very cautious.”

To a few close associates, including IFSB chief investigator Gray Barker, Bender related that in late September, after he had confided a UFO theory to an unnamed correspondent, three dark-suited men visited him. The men, who Bender indicated were agents of the U.S. government, imparted the alarming answer to the UFO mystery and threatened him with imprisonment if he told anyone.

Bender’s “silencing” obsessed Barker, who would go on to become a prominent writer, editor, and publisher on the fringes of saucerdom. In a February 1954 article he cautiously summarized all that was known, which was not much. The article mentioned Australian ufologist Edgar Jarrold, who recently had received a visitor who told him startling UFO secrets that Jarrold was directed to keep to himself. Not long afterwards a badly frightened Jarrold dropped out of active UFO research.

Almost certainly the Bender and Jarrold matters would have passed into obscurity if not for *They Knew Too Much About Flying Saucers*, the book Barker would write two years later. *They Knew Too Much* launched the men-in-black legend in ufology. In 246 pages of paranoia-drenched prose, Barker recounted the doings of the sinister “Silence Group,” which brought enforcers in dark suits to the residences of UFO researchers who got too close to the truth. Among the victims, Barker asserted, were Bender, Dahl, and Crisman in the United States, Jarrold in Australia, John Stuart and Doreen Wilkinson in New Zealand, and “Gordon Smallwood” (Laimon Mitris) in an unnamed country “outside U.S.A.” (Canada). Barker freely speculated that the silencers might be of unearthly origin, and he warned readers that soon they “will be at your door, too, unless we all get wise and find out who the three men really are.”

Barker featured what he called the “Bender mystery” in the pages of his magazine *The Saucerian* (later *Saucerian Bulletin*), whose readership consisted mostly of persons attracted to the emerging **contactee** movement. Conservative ufologists paid little attention to men-in-black tales, but such stories frightened and enthralled saucer fans of paranoid disposition.



In 1962, in *Flying Saucers and the Three Men*, Bender told what he represented as the true story of his silencing. The silencing occurred, he wrote, after he incurred the wrath of monstrous extraterrestrials who kidnapped him to the South Pole. These beings monitored his activities until 1960, when they returned to their home planet Kazik and Bender was freed to tell his tale. Even Barker, who published the book under his Saucerian imprint, privately expressed disbelief, and most readers did not take it seriously.

Still, whatever his off-stage reservations, Barker kept the “mystery” alive in a series of publications, the last of which appeared a year before his death. In 1963 he released both *The Bender Mystery Confirmed*, an anthology of readers’ sometimes strange responses to *Three Men*, and the more interesting—and even stranger—*UFO Warning*, John Stuart’s allegedly true account of how supernatural sexual harassment drove him and Doreen Wilkinson out of ufology.

There was no way to reconcile Bender’s earlier story, sketchy though it was, with the latter tale. Those whose interest in the matter had not yet flagged could only deduce that either the “Bender mystery” was a fabrication from the outset or the first story was true and the second a concoction intended to end years of pestering by UFO buffs. Persons who knew Bender, recalling how frightened he had been in the fall of 1953, remained convinced that government agents had indeed threatened him.

Bender eventually moved to California. Since the late 1960s he has had virtually nothing to do with UFOs and ufologists. It is likely that the truth will come to light only if one day someone finds the relevant documents in an official file—assuming, of course, Bender was in fact the subject of government attention. In the meantime, however, a plausible retrospective interpretation of the episode is possible.

In January 1953 the Central Intelligence Agency, fearing that the Soviet Union might use UFO reports for psychological warfare ends, assembled a panel of five American scientists, under the leadership of physicist H. P. Robertson (see **Robertson Panel**). Over the next four days, in Washington, D.C., the scientists devoted a total of 12 hours to reviewing data from the Air Force’s **Project Blue Book**. Their final report contended that UFO reports, while all potentially explainable, comprised a danger to national security because they could “overload channels of communication with material quite irrelevant to hostile objects that might some day appear.” Thus the Air Force should energetically debunk UFOs and embark on an educational campaign to discourage public interest, thereby reducing the “dangers related to ‘flying saucers.’”

Furthermore, civilian UFO groups “should be watched because of their potentially great influence on mass thinking if widespread sightings should occur. The apparent irresponsibility and the possible use of such groups for subversive purposes should be kept in mind.”

In September 1953, when Bender allegedly met the three agents, the Robertson panel's existence, formally classified Secret, was unknown to anyone in the civilian UFO community.

There are other, more specific reasons Bender may have drawn official interest. Unlike most other saucer clubs of the period, IFSB participated actively in investigations of UFO reports. The most remarkable of these was a physical-evidence case. Shortly after 9 p.m. on August 19, 1953, residents of New Haven, Connecticut, heard an explosion and observed a fast-moving, ricocheting "fireball" at treetop level. They also saw a freshly made foot-wide hole in a nearby metal signboard. The object apparently had ripped through 20-gauge steel and continued on its way undeterred. Naval Ordnance personnel were on the scene soon afterwards. So was IFSB investigator August C. Roberts, who managed to extract at least one small piece from the sign.

IFSB sent the sample to Col. Robert B. Emerson, a Louisiana-based physicist, member of the U.S. Army Reserve, and IFSB research consultant, later to serve on the Board of Governors of the **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena**. Emerson said he would contact friends at the atomic-research facility at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, about having it analyzed. If anything came of this, no record of it survives. A separate analysis arranged through the Wisconsin-based **Aerial Phenomena Research Organization** determined that a second fragment consisted mostly of copper and copper oxide. This, plus the fireball's movement, ruled out any possibility it was a meteorite.

In a reconstruction of the Bender episode, Michael D. Swords has suggested that Roberts's retrieval of the metal pieces—"under the noses of Naval Ordnance investigators"—would almost certainly have attracted the attention of federal authorities. Furthermore, he writes, IFSB

was a civilian organization actually attempting scientific research on UFOs (case studies, photo analysis, metallurgy). In some significant way it may have been the first such organization probing into the flying discs in this fashion. It also had an expanding international network for sharing projects and information. One such project between Bender and his Australian and New Zealand colleagues was to plot UFO flight paths in hopes of discovering their bases of origin. What do you think U.S. intelligence thought of all this in 1953?

It requires little genius to suspect that the CIA, et al., were monitoring this organization and that several developments indicated that the stage in which the IFSB was only a harmless flying-saucer club was passing. International projects plotting unidentified aircraft flights are plenty enough to concern the CIA. . . . Also it was the period directly following the Robertson Panel and its CIA concerns with the potential Soviet manipulation of the UFO phenomenon. What would intelligence



agencies' opinions be about a bunch of Americans preaching an open-arms welcome for strange incoming ships in the sky?

This interpretation does not necessarily require us to believe that the United States government was covering up secrets related to extraterrestrial visitation (nor, of course, does it contradict this view). The copper "fireball" may have been a military device, the aircraft flights those of Allied or Soviet planes. The fantastic, frightening story the three men told Bender may have been concocted for his benefit, to scare him out of further UFO research.

If this is indeed what happened, Bender would not be the last victim of such a counterintelligence scheme. In the early 1980s Albuquerque physicist and UFO enthusiast Paul Bennewitz became the target of intimidation after he monitored electronic signals emanating from a nuclear installation near Kirtland Air Force Base. Bennewitz decided that these messages were of extraterrestrial origin, sent from UFOs operating in the area. The signals, which were not illusory, were part of a highly classified military experiment, though there is no reason to think they had anything to do with UFOs. When Kirtland authorities learned of Bennewitz's eavesdropping, they turned on him with a vengeance, employing psychological-warfare techniques that one observer and partial participant has claimed were intended to trigger an emotional collapse. If so, they succeeded. Bennewitz was already entertaining dark, conspiratorial theories about UFOs and their intentions; operatives from the Air Force Office of Special Investigations passed on disinformation, alleged to be the U.S. government's deepest UFO secrets, which confirmed and enlarged on Bennewitz's fantasies. Bennewitz became so distraught that soon afterwards he was hospitalized. He subsequently retired from the UFO scene. (See **Dark Side**.)

The Jarrold affair, it is now known, was neither so menacing nor so mysterious as Barker made it out to be, and it had nothing to do with the "Bender mystery." Jarrold's flying-saucer obsession had placed him in an unstable state that soon led to an emotional breakdown and the break-up of his family. The purportedly enigmatic visitor whom Barker linked to Bender's men in black was in reality—as Barker privately knew—an itinerant occultist, contactee, and retired bank security guard named Gordon Deller. Deller told the impressionable Jarrold that flying saucers were of "etheric" (other-dimensional) origin, that etherians had chosen Jarrold as one of their earthly agents, and that their coming had to do with an imminent geological cataclysm. Deller also called on Jarrold's New Zealand friend and colleague Harold Fulton, who dismissed him as an amiable crackpot. After leaving New Zealand, Deller traveled to the United States and Canada where he may have met, among others, Laimon Mitris.

**John Keel and the MIB.** By the mid-1950s the legend of the men in black had become fixed in the imaginations of saucerdom's most excitable. Yet, with the arguable exception of the early Bender affair (as opposed to the later Bender book), it was much ado about little beyond fabrication, paranoia, and Barker's promotion-

al genius. Probably the notion of men in black would have devolved into vague memory had it not been for the efforts of John A. Keel. Through Keel men in black were not only revived but transformed into something else entirely: the "MIB."

Though he did not appear on the UFO scene until the mid-1960s, Keel would become one of the most influential writers in the history of ufology. At a time when the mainstream ufological consensus had only recently embraced reports of even briefly observed UFO occupants (later to be called **close encounters of the third kind**), Keel, essentially a demonologist, championed a far more exotic vision of the UFO phenomenon than anyone but fringe figures had fancied heretofore.

Among the entities whose activities Keel chronicled were not-quite-human individuals who intimidated witnesses and who seemed linked with UFOs. Sometimes, he wrote, they threatened witnesses who had not told anyone else about their sightings. Usually they wore dark suits, sometimes with turtleneck sweaters, and had dark complexions and Oriental features. Others were pale and bug-eyed. Their behavior was frequently odd, as if they were operating in an environment alien to them. In many cases they drove black Cadillacs or other limousinelike vehicles. Keel had no doubt that his informants were telling the truth because he himself had seen these entities on more than one occasion.

Keel claimed to have had numerous phone conversations with a "Mr. Apol," who "did not know who or what he was. He was a prisoner of our time frame. He often confused the past with the future. I gathered that he and all his fellow entities found themselves transported backward and forward in time involuntarily, playing out their little games because they were programmed to do so, living—or existing—only so long as they could feed off the energy and minds of mediums and contactees." A Long Island woman allegedly saw Mr. Apol. She knew it was he because when he stepped out of a black Cadillac he shook her hand—his own was "as cold as ice"—and so introduced himself. She said he resembled a "Hawaiian."

In Keel's view MIB are ubiquitous presences in human history, responsible for or related to such disparate phenomena as the Grim Reaper image, vampire lore, and demonological visitations. "A dark gentleman in a cloak and hood is supposed to have handed Thomas Jefferson the design for the reverse side of the Great Seal of the United States," he has written. "Julius Caesar, Napoleon, and many others are supposed to have had enigmatic meetings with these odd personages." Another, according to Keel, was Malcolm X. Keel claims, moreover:

Men In Black are also an integral part of the Oriental belief in the King of the World. Ancient tradition in parts of China, Tibet and India claims that there is an underground city where the King of the World runs everything by sending spies and minions to the surface. They dress in black robes and suits, of course, their countenances are very Oriental. In the Middle East, they move around the deserts in black robes and headdresses.



**Oz Factor.** Late one November afternoon in 1980, at the University of Pennsylvania library, Peter M. Rojcewicz was doing research for a Ph.D. thesis on the folklore of UFOs. "I sat alone in a wing facing a large window to the south," he would recall. "I had the table closest to the window, facing the window. Without any sound to indicate that someone was approaching me from behind, I noticed from the corner of my right eye what I supposed was a man's black pant leg. He was wearing rather worn black leather shoes."

The stranger walked around the table and briefly looked out the window, his back to Rojcewicz, then turned and sat down. He was dark-complexioned, tall, thin, sunken-eyed, and wearing a rumpled black suit. Speaking articulately with a slight accent Rojcewicz thought to be "European," he asked what the young man was doing. A short conversation on UFOs followed. When the stranger asked if he had ever seen a UFO, Rojcewicz said he was more interested at the moment in stories of flying saucers than in the question of whether UFOs existed as physical spacecraft.

The man suddenly shouted, "Flying saucers are the most important fact of the century, and you're not interested?" Startled and afraid that he might be dealing with a lunatic, Rojcewicz tried to calm him, and the man lapsed into silence. Then he stood up "as if he were mechanically lifted." He placed his hand on Rojcewicz's shoulder and said (as close as Rojcewicz could remember), "Go well in your purpose." Rojcewicz did not watch him go. But a few seconds later he became abruptly fearful as the strangeness of the encounter hit him.

I got up, walked two steps in the direction he had left in, turned around, and returned again to my seat. Got up again. I was highly excited and finally walked around the stacks to the reference desk and nobody was behind the desk. In fact, I could see no one at all in the library. I've gone to graduate school, and I've never been in a library when there wasn't *somebody* there! No one was even at the information desk across the room. I was close to panicking and went quickly back to my desk. I sat down and tried to calm myself. In about an hour I rose to leave the library. There were two librarians behind each of the two desks!

Rojcewicz here describes an odd impression some UFO witnesses have described but whose significance went unappreciated until British ufologist Jenny Randles took note of what she called the "**Oz Factor**"—"the sensation of being isolated, or transported from the real world into [another] environmental framework . . . where reality is but slightly different." The Oz Factor figures in other MIB reports as well.

**Official agents?** In early 1967 Col. George P. Freeman, a Pentagon spokesman for Project Blue Book, reported that unknown individuals posing as Air Force officers or as government agents were threatening UFO witnesses, sometimes even confiscating photographs. "We have checked a number of these cases," he said. "We haven't been able to find out anything about these men. By posing as Air Force

officers and government agents they are committing a federal offense. We would sure like to catch one."

A few months later, in May 1967, a man identifying himself as Maj. Richard French called on an Owatonna, Minnesota, woman. "He was about five feet nine inches tall with a kind of olive complexion and pointed face," she later told John Keel. "His hair was dark and very long—too long for an Air Force officer, we thought. He spoke perfect English. He was well educated." He wore a fashionable gray suit, white shirt, and black tie.

In the course of the conversation, which dealt with a UFO experience she and a friend had undergone the previous November, French complained of stomach problems, and the woman replied that he might try some jello. French said he would return for some if the problems continued. The following morning he showed up at the door, and the woman sat him down with a bowl of Jello, which he proceeded to try to drink. "I had to show him how to eat it with a spoon," she recalled. Coincidentally—so one assumes—in the early to mid 1960s the Pentagon spokesman for Project Blue Book was someone named Richard France.

According to ufologist William L. Moore, "the Men in Black are really government people in disguise . . . members of a rather bizarre unit of Air Force intelligence known currently as the Air Force Special Activities Center (AFSAC). . . . As of 1991, the AFSAC, headquartered at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, has been under the operational authority of the Air Force Intelligence Command centered at Kelly Air Force Base in Texas." Moore alleges that "Gray Barker's early-'50s hype" inspired operatives to dress in dark suits and to imitate the men in black of early and later lore. Presumably, if we are to credit Moore's assertions, "Richard French" was having fun at the expense of a UFO witness.

Indeed, many accounts concern individuals who look and behave like normal human beings, or at least normal military officers or intelligence agents, albeit ones who appear under peculiar circumstances (see, for example, **North Dakota CE3**).

Consider this March 16, 1993, story from the Groom Lake, Nevada, area, near the site of a highly classified military base at which stealth aircraft are being flown and from which unsubstantiated rumors of captured UFOs and extraterrestrial technology have circulated for years. A couple who had come to watch aerial activity from a hill adjacent to the base saw strange UFO-like lights that, subsequently and confusingly, seemed to transform themselves into an automotive vehicle. After the sighting was concluded, the witnesses sensed that half an hour of the encounter was unaccounted for. Soon afterwards they underwent hypnosis during which they "recalled" an abduction by gray-skinned UFO beings. The man was taken into the craft while the woman was led into a white van she had seen earlier as the two were driving to the site. According to an account written by the male witness, ufologist William F. Hamilton III:

Inside the van, two men, dressed entirely in black with black baseball caps on their heads, subjected her to intrusive procedures. They admin-



istered some drops in her right eye and placed an odd instrument into her left ear canal. She remembered seeing electronic instruments inside the van as well as automatic rifles. She also recalls that these men admonished her not to speak about her experiences. She did not see the little Gray [alien] during this period, nor does she remember exactly how she was placed back in position by our truck.

Stories like this one show that the MIB image not only continues but continues to be adaptable to new circumstances and to fresh ufological contexts.

**MIB in experience and imagination.** In some instances, as we have seen, men-in-black reports can be plausibly interpreted as instances of official interest in UFO sightings, especially those of an unusually evidential nature. MIB reports, on the other hand, tend, as we have seen, to have an outlandish, surrealistic flavor. Keel, Rojcewicz, and other chroniclers, who take the stories at face value, have offered various explanations based on their belief in occult phenomena (see **Paranormal and Occult Theories about UFOs**). Others, for example Hilary Evans, see MIB experiences as psychological experiences of a particularly remarkable kind, though he acknowledges the limitations of this sort of reductionism.

Unless all those reporting such experiences are lying—an appealing proposition for which, unfortunately, no good evidence exists—it is hard to imagine an explanation that does not force us to exceed the boundaries of current knowledge. Yet MIB (as opposed to men-in-black) stories, products solely of memory and testimony, can be little more than curiosities.

One provisional interpretation, more descriptive than explanatory, might be that such occurrences take place in an “experiential reality”—a kind of subjective state that, at least in its ostensible physical setting, is indistinguishable from event-level reality; yet within this seemingly familiar environment, unearthly entities of various kinds appear and interact with the experient. They may be no more “real” than figures in unusually vivid dreams; thus, for example, they leave no footprints when they are seen to cross a muddy field.

This is in itself an extraordinary hypothesis, positing a kind of hallucinatory experience unrecognized by psychology, whose notion of what comprises a hallucination is far more modest, and it is hard to imagine how such an explanation could apply to that minority of cases involving more than one witness. Even by UFO-report standards, MIB stories are hugely anomalous. Possibly MIB are a strange experiential phenomenon inspired by UFO sightings but not truly related to them.

Thomas E. Bullard, a folklorist specializing in UFO-related beliefs, has placed MIB in a broader tradition of mysterious visitants:

[A]lmost a sense of familiarity attaches to the Men in Black. They step into the shoes vacated by angels and demons to serve as modernized versions of otherworldly messengers, modified to reflect extraterrestrial rather than supernatural employment but clearly functionaries in the same mold. Even high gods like Odin in Norse mythology sometimes

disguised themselves and roamed the earth to dispense justice or stir up strife among humans, but this sort of work usually devolved on a servant class of beings. In classical belief demons populated the earth in great number, as did fairies in Celtic folklore, and like fairies these demons worked to help or harm mortals. In Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian and Islamic beliefs these beings lost some of their choice of action as they divided into two distinct camps, one loyal to God and the other henchmen of the devil. . . . Devils and demonic beings enjoy broader license for mischief as they cause harm by whatever means their evil imaginations can devise. . . . [T]he primary activity of demons is to tempt humans into sin. For this purpose demons often disguise themselves by transformation and a common motif in folklore leaves an imperfection in the disguise, often the cloven hoofs of the devil going unchanged. Strange feet and an "artificial" or doll-like look are common traits of Men in Black as well. The devil of folklore sometimes rides a black carriage, the nearest thing to a Cadillac, and often has considerable knowledge and power. If he harms a human he may have to win the permission or cooperation of the victim first, often by trickery; but the saint with a trust in God knew that the devil had no power over the faithful. This theme perhaps reflects the usual harmlessness of Men in Black despite their ability to threaten and scare a witness, though the parallels between devil lore and Men in Black lore are mostly remote. We can even wonder if MIBs are really evil, since their warning to keep silent might offer good practical advice after all, everything considered.

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## MENZEL, DONALD HOWARD (1901-1976)

To Donald H. Menzel, UFOs were something that "scientists of the 21st century will look back on as the greatest nonsense of the 20th century." Menzel's obsession with this "modern myth" led him to write three books debunking it: *Flying Saucers* (1953); *The World of Flying Saucers* (1963, with Lyle G. Boyd); and the posthumously published *The UFO Enigma* (1977, with Ernest H. Taves). Until the

emergence of aviation journalist Philip J. Klass as the world's premier scourge of the UFO phenomenon, Menzel was ufology's leading critic.

Born in Florence, Colorado, on April 11, 1901, Menzel was a boy genius who learned Morse code and was devouring books before entering first grade. An early interest in chemistry led him to enroll, at age 16, in the University of Colorado, but an observation of a total eclipse of the sun on June 8, 1918, persuaded him to switch to astronomy. He received a graduate assistantship in astronomy at Princeton University. He also became enthralled with the emerging discipline of astrophysics.

During the summers Menzel worked as a research assistant to Harlow Shapley at Harvard Observatory. His doctoral thesis was written in 1923 and 1924, and for a time he and Princeton astronomer Henry Norris Russell were the only two practicing theoretical astrophysicists in America. Already an accomplished scientist known for wide-ranging interests, he taught briefly at the University of Iowa and at Ohio State University. In 1926 he became assistant astronomer at Lick Observatory on Mount Hamilton in California, where he conducted pioneering astrophysical research. From J. Robert Oppenheimer he learned how to apply atomic theory to astrophysics.

Menzel joined the Harvard faculty on September 1, 1932, and achieved full professorship in 1938. He was appointed acting director of Harvard Observatory in 1952 and served as full director from 1954 to 1966. During this period the observatory became a major center for radio astronomy and space research. From 1954 to 1956 he served as president of the American Astronomical Society and was its director-at-large between 1959 and 1961. Besides making significant contributions to other, nonastronomical areas of science, from 1964 until his death he was a State Department consultant in Latin American affairs. He retired from Harvard in 1971.

**Menzel's revised UFOs.** On May 12, 1949, Menzel had a personal encounter with the UFO phenomenon. His initial account of the incident did not come to light until the 1970s, when researcher Brad Sparks managed to uncover the report, sent to the Air Force and marked "CONFIDENTIAL."

Menzel related that at 9:30 that evening he and a driver left Holloman Air Force Base on their way to Alamogordo, New Mexico. As they traveled along Highway 70, heading east-northeast, Menzel, in the backseat, noted the presence of the reddish star Antares just below and to the left of the full moon, ascending in the southeast.

A minute or two later he saw another object in the sky, this one nearer the horizon and farther to the left. As he told the Air Force, "The star had a fuzzy appearance, caused, I thought, by low-level atmospheric haze. As I watched, I noted, within half a minute, a second star about three degrees to the South of the first." Thinking at first that these were the stars Castor and Pollux, he watched them for another minute as they gradually became brighter.

Suddenly he realized that "the two stars had to be something else." They were too big, and Castor and Pollux were in the western, not the east-southeast-

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ern sky. The objects were "very nearly identical in diameter, nearly one-half the size of the full moon." The drawing accompanying his report shows two small circles.

Quickly determining that these were not reflections on his bifocals or on the car window, he continued to observe the "ghostly objects" for another four minutes. They were white, almost as bright as the brightest stars, and level with each other. Then the object on the right "suddenly disappeared." Convinced that what he was seeing was "exceptional," he ordered the driver to stop immediately, but the very moment he was speaking, the second object vanished instantly.

Menzel calculated that if the objects were truly motionless, as they seemed to be, they were at least "180 miles away" and about "3/4 of a mile" in size. (If they were closer and in motion, they would be smaller.)

When Menzel submitted his report to the Air Force soon afterwards, he was clearly puzzled. But when he recounted the story four years later, in his first anti-UFO book, he had it solved, even though he grudgingly acknowledged that "I cannot explain the phenomenon in every detail. . . . It was," he wrote, "merely a reflection of the moon. . . . A layer of haze, perhaps disturbed and tilted by the moving car, probably caused the trick reflections of the moon." The situation was comparable to "that of a person riding in a fast motorboat. He might see the moon reflected in the bow wave thrown up by the boat. But the reflection would vanish when the boat stopped." Therefore, he reasoned, the lunar-reflection theory "would also explain why the pair of ghostly attendants faded at the moment we stopped the car; the reflecting bumps would then disappear." As Sparks has pointed out (his italics):

The facts that Menzel so neatly fitted to his moon-reflection hypothesis are exactly wrong. These UFOs that Menzel called "extra moons" in his four-year-old account actually were *one-fourth to one-half* the apparent size of the moon, according to his original four *day*-old report. The UFOs did not "fade away," they "suddenly disappeared." And that did not



Astronomer and UFO debunker Donald H. Menzel. (Fortean Picture Library)



occur when the car stopped, but while the car was *still traveling at 50 mph*. The second UFO vanished at the precise moment that Menzel *asked* the driver to stop. By then the first UFO was already gone.

Menzel had altered the details of his own sighting so that he could “explain” it. There is no mention of this sighting in Menzel’s two subsequent UFO books, though in the last volume he would claim his “first encounter” with alleged UFOs was in 1955.

**Menzel vs. UFO.** Menzel began his public career as UFO debunker in 1952, with an article in the mass-circulation *Look* and with an interview in *Time*. On October 11 the Optical Society of America invited Menzel, Atomic Energy Commission member Urner Liddel, and **Project Blue Book** consultant **J. Allen Hynek** to present papers at its Boston conference. Menzel and his friend Liddel scoffed at the subject, while Hynek, though skeptical, argued for an open-minded approach. In his report to Blue Book, Hynek was critical of what he had heard from his colleagues:

The papers of Menzel and Liddell [sic], though differing somewhat in content, were identical in spirit. Both papers were characterized by the fact that numerous explanations for unexplained sightings were given without a single reference to a specific sighting in the files of the Air Technical Intelligence Center [AITC, which oversaw Blue Book at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base]. Both papers presented a series of well-worn statements as to how jet fighters, meteors, reflections from balloons and aircraft, and optical effects, such as sundogs and mirages, could give rise to “flying saucer” reports. Since there was nothing new in either of the two papers, the trip from this standpoint was unproductive.

*Flying Saucers* (1953), Menzel’s first book, may not have been original in its insistence that while people have seen aerial objects they could not identify, the objects “are not what people thought they saw.” From the beginning of the UFO era in the summer of 1947, skeptics and debunkers were forced into arguments like this. The reason was simple: in many of the seemingly most puzzling sightings, observers were describing structured objects that, if their testimony was to be taken literally, indicated somebody, perhaps an unearthly somebody, was building flying saucers. From the debunkers’ perspective, either witnesses were lying, or their imaginations were transforming ordinary atmospheric phenomena into spacecraft. For the rest of his life, this would be Menzel’s essential argument against the existence of UFOs.

If its arguments were not strikingly original, *Flying Saucers* was still significant. For one thing, it was the first book-length brief against UFOs. Second, it would be one of the few UFO books ever released under the imprint of an academic publisher. And third, it was the first UFO book by a scientist, and a prominent one at that. That meant a great deal to colleagues who might otherwise have been intrigued enough to conduct their own inquiries. To many scientists and much of

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the public, Menzel represented nothing less than science's judgment on the UFO phenomenon.

**Menzel vs. the Air Force.** Menzel's critics tended to be individuals, not all of them UFO proponents, who had direct experience in UFO investigation. Hynek was not alone in his reservations about the correctness of Menzel's approach. In private notes Blue Book's head Capt. **Edward J. Ruppelt** recounts a May 1952 meeting in the Pentagon office of Stefan Possony, acting chief of the Directorate of Intelligence Special Study Group under Maj. Gen. John A. Samford, the Air Force's intelligence director. Besides Possony, those in attendance included Ruppelt, ATIC chief Col. Frank Dunn, Brig. Gen. W. M. Garland (who would succeed Dunn at ATIC that fall), Possony's assistant Leslie Rosenzweig, and one other officer. All had experience in UFO investigation and analysis, and all had been summoned to hear Menzel express his views. As Ruppelt remembered it:

The meeting got right underway with Menzel telling us very bluntly that he had solved the UFO problem for the Air Force. He minced no words. I had heard of Menzel and I was duly impressed with his accomplishments. He said that he had been studying the UFO phenomena [sic] for a long time and that he had done all of the development work for the cameras in Project Twinkle [see **Green Fireballs and Other Southwestern Lights**]. This seemed a little odd to me because I was very familiar with all of the work on Twinkle and I had never heard of his connection with the project. . . .

He went on to tell about how he had seen a UFO while at White Sands P.G. [Proving Grounds] some years before and how he . . . had determined that it was a mirage—of sorts. He told how he had done some experiments with liquids of different densities, etc.[,] to prove his ideas about what he'd seen.

After he went through all of this he asked if there were any comments. The way he did this immediately irked everyone at the meeting. He had the attitude that this is it. . . . I wasn't at all convinced that he had as much as he thought he did because he had the same approach and attitude that I had seen in a dozen other people all of whom had the answer. But I hated to say anything due to his stature in the field of science.

Possony, however, did not hesitate to challenge his scientific colleague. He asked Menzel why he thought his "few very elementary and simple experiments" proved anything, or if he would seek answers to problems in his own specialty with such minimal effort. Menzel "hedged a lot on this question," according to Ruppelt, and switched the subject to **hoaxes**, claiming that they played a large role in UFO-reporting. In Ruppelt's words:

Gen. Garland began to get a little fidgety about this time and told Menzel that we were well aware of how many of the sightings were hoaxes, about 2 or 3 percent.

Then Menzel announced that he had sold a story of his ideas to *Time* and *Look*. He said that he would like to have the Air Force publicly back him up 100% in these two magazines. At this Gen. Garland about blew his stack in the silent manner in which he blew a stack. Steve Possony asked Menzel if it might not be more scientific to do a little more research on the subject before he went out and sold the story. Also, he said [he] thought that Menzel could have approached the Air Force a little sooner. Then Col. Dunn said that he thought that ATIC—specifically Blue Book—would have been very glad to put a little money into a more formal type of experiment. He went [on] to say that he didn't think that the Air Force would care to endorse something that we knew so little about. He did say that we would be glad to say that Menzel had told us about the theory and that this could be released through the PIO [Public Information Office].

At this Menzel blew his stack. It was no theory, he said. Then he began to throw around the name Jonathan Leonard of *Time* magazine and said that he was behind this 100% and that Leonard would do this and that.

After a bit more of a hassle I asked Menzel if he would leave us a copy of his work so that we could show it to a few of ATIC's consultants. He wanted to know who[m] we would show it to and I said Dr. Joe Kaplan, of the physics department of UCLA, [and] Dr. Hynek, of Ohio State, and I would also like to have the people at "Project Bear" [Ruppelt's pseudonym for the Battelle Memorial Institute, then secretly analyzing Blue Book data; see **Project Blue Book Special Report No. 14**] run some theoretical calculations on it.

Menzel refused this suggestion and folded up his data and got ready to leave. Gen. Garland again told him that if he cared to, he could mail the data to us at ATIC.

Soon after the Optical Society meeting Menzel wrote Blue Book and proposed that he be appointed unpaid consultant and that a nonprofit corporation take over the project's work. Blue Book wanted a formal proposal, and when one came, it met with universal disapproval. It was too expensive, for one thing, and for another, it turned out that Menzel "had a considerable interest in this organization." Not long afterwards Dr. Kaplan, who was skeptical of Menzel's conclusions, brought the proposal and other material from Menzel to a geophysical congress in Italy and showed it to other scientists, who "were likewise unimpressed." ATIC notified Menzel that it was rejecting the proposal.

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Menzel next tried to gain access to Blue Book's files for a book he was writing. When Col. Dunn tried to make the arrangements, security people overruled him on the grounds that Menzel did not have the proper clearances (not true; see below). After Menzel expressed displeasure when informed, Dunn sought to mollify him by suggesting he could get data through the PIO.

Determined to get his hands on the ATIC data, Menzel apparently conspired with a Harvard colleague, who had both ATIC connections and the necessary clearances, to approach Blue Book with another proposal. The colleague, a computer specialist, suggested that he be supplied with the ATIC reports and study them for patterns. He would have the work done and the reports returned within a month, he promised. Blue Book shipped him three months' worth of reports. According to Ruppelt:

One month passed, then two, and not a word [from A., the computer specialist]. I called him several times and he was "just getting ready to send them back" each time. Finally I sent [Lt.] Bob [Olsson] up to Boston to get the reports but when he arrived [A.] couldn't produce them. We did get them back a few days later.

When *Flying Saucers* came out, ATIC personnel were displeased to find their classified reports in the text. Ruppelt wanted to pursue an investigation. He conceded that the reports probably ought to have been declassified long ago, but Menzel's sneakiness rankled him, and A's collusion made the two of them "darn poor security risks." Ruppelt was dissuaded from pushing the issue.

**The crusade against the UFO.** In due course, as debunking hardliners took over Blue Book after Ruppelt's departure in September 1953, the project and Menzel resolved their differences. "On several occasions" between 1958 and 1962, Blue Book director Maj. Robert J. Friend noted, "Dr. Donald H. Menzel spent weeks at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base reviewing both old and new cases, and he made many useful suggestions." Under the tenure of the even more dismissive Maj. (later Lt. Col.) Hector Quintanilla, Jr., Menzel played an ever larger role in the project until its closing in 1969.

Meantime Menzel continued his crusade on other fronts, informing colleagues at the International Astronomical Union that discussion of "fantastic nonsense [UFOs] has no part in business dealt with on such a high scientific level as at these meetings." Menzel sought repeatedly to make clear that the UFO phenomenon had no scientific legitimacy and that those who felt otherwise would have to deal with him.

Scientists who could have publicly challenged Menzel chose not to do so, though close readers of his books could not have helped noting that the solutions were largely speculative and that most or all were derived from the comfort of the armchair. Moreover, they sometimes contradicted each other. For example, in three books he proposed five solutions to the Kenneth **Arnold sighting**, each flying in

the face of specific statements, none cited by Menzel, made by the witness. He misrepresented crucial data in other cases and indulged freely in speculation without evidence.

All of this led the eminent psychologist and philosopher C. G. Jung (1875-1961) to express the exasperated observation that Menzel "has not succeeded, despite all his efforts, in offering a satisfying scientific explanation of even one authentic UFO report." In a retrospective on Menzel's career written to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death, a British astronomer charged that the Harvard astronomer had "consistently misrepresented cases" and abused his power in this and other ways.

Worst of all, from the critics' point of view, Menzel's explanations either stretched natural laws to the breaking point or violated them altogether. After his death scientifically trained writers such as Bruce Maccabee and Brad Sparks would excoriate Menzel on these grounds, but in Menzel's lifetime only the occasional ufologist with the requisite knowledge of atmospheric physics—Aimé Michel most prominently—employed this argument. The first scientist to challenge Menzel this way came along in the late 1960s, and he did not mince words.

**James E. McDonald**, a University of Arizona atmospheric physicist, had thrown himself headlong into UFO investigation, interviewing hundreds of witnesses, reading the literature, and burrowing into military and civilian archives. Like Menzel, he had had a UFO sighting of his own years before. Unlike Menzel, he was convinced of the correctness of the **extraterrestrial hypothesis**. He sought to alert his colleagues to what he regarded as "the greatest scientific problem of our times." Knowing Menzel had done much to persuade them otherwise, McDonald felt he had to demonstrate just how wrong Menzel was. In a 1967 lecture he had this to say:

There is one scientist who has written and lectured a great deal about UFOs, and who has certainly looked at a lot of cases without being convinced that the UFO problem involves anything of great scientific interest. That is Dr. Donald Menzel, former Director of the Harvard College Observatory. Dr. Menzel has published two books on UFOs, both aimed at explaining UFOs chiefly in terms of misinterpreted meteorological and astronomical phenomena. . . . I am deeply puzzled by those books, especially the more recent one.

My puzzlement stems from realizing that Dr. Menzel's background in physics and astronomy is well-attested by his authorship of a number of texts and references in those areas. Despite that background, when he comes to analyzing UFO reports, he seems to calmly cast aside well-known scientific principles almost with abandon, in an all-out effort to be sure that no UFO report survives his attack. Refraction processes are quite well understood in optics, and the refracting properties of the atmosphere are surely as familiar in astronomy as in meteorology, if not

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more so. Yet in “explanation” after “explanation” in his books, Menzel rides roughshod over elementary optical considerations governing such things as mirages and light reflections.

In response Menzel called McDonald a pseudoscientist and a crank. He ripped into McDonald for speaking with witnesses, a waste of time in Menzel’s view, and further charged—falsely—that “McDonald and the other believers immediately consider *every* UFO to be from outer space, and they leave it to us nonbelievers to prove them wrong.”

Menzel’s last major statement on the UFO phenomenon was at the December 1969 **American Association for the Advancement of Science UFO Symposium** in Boston. His health failing, Menzel was not able to attend personally but had his paper, a long restatement of the views he had held since the early 1950s, read by AAAS president Walter Orr Roberts.

Menzel died on December 14, 1976.

**Majestic deception?** Though Menzel was active in numerous scientific, business, and government organizations, the standard biographies do not list him as a member of a group called Operation MJ-12. The one document linking him to this mysterious group arrived in December 1984 on a roll of 35-mm film in an envelope addressed to the North Hollywood, California, residence of producer Jaime Shandera. There was no return address. When the film was developed, it revealed seven pages of a briefing supposedly given on November 18, 1952, to President-elect Dwight Eisenhower by Adm. Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter, first head of the CIA.

The briefing paper reported that the U.S. government had recovered two crashed UFOs and the bodies of four extraterrestrial humanoids. On September 24, 1947, it said, Operation Majestic-12 was established by executive order to oversee policy and research relating to such matters. Its members were 12 prominent figures in military, intelligence, and science, all but one—Donald Menzel, of all people—known to have had high security clearances.

Following the release of the MJ-12 document to the public in the spring of 1987, Stanton T. Friedman, UFO researcher and nuclear physicist, embarked on an investigation of Menzel’s background and made some interesting discoveries. Friedman found that Menzel led a double life: one as a scientist, the other as the keeper of some of America’s most important national-security secrets. This fact was not known even to his biographers, though his World War II chairmanship of the Radio Propagation Committee of the Joint and Combined Chiefs of Staff (dealing with radar and communications matters) and of the Section of Mathematical and Physical Research of U.S. Naval Communications was in Menzel’s public biographies.

Probing private archives and interviewing persons, Friedman learned that Menzel had a long association with the highly classified National Security Agency.

He also possessed a Navy TOP SECRET ULTRA security clearance, did consulting for 30 industrial companies on classified projects, and worked for the CIA.

Friedman found that Vannevar Bush, President Harry Truman's chief science adviser and supposed MJ-12 member, had been a close professional associate and personal friend of Menzel's. During the McCarthy period, when through trumped-up charges Menzel was briefly deemed a security risk by the Air Force, his staunchest defender at the resulting secret hearings was Bush. Menzel also had known associations with other identified MJ-12 members such as Detlev Bronk and Lloyd Berkner. He was also known as a man who kept his mouth shut on national-security matters—witness his silence on his clearances when ATIC assumed he had none (see above).

According to Friedman, Menzel pretended to be a debunker because he wanted to keep "almost a whole generation of scientists in both the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. from even nibbling at the UFO phenomenon." His double role explains, he says, "how such an important astrophysicist could be such a lousy ufologist."

Persons close to Menzel have scoffed at the suggestion that he secretly believed UFOs to be real. After a decade's worth of investigation into Menzel's background, Friedman has been able to make only a thinly circumstantial case. The evidence that the MJ-12 document is a forgery is considerable. Conceivably the forger (still unknown) meant the inclusion of Menzel's name among MJ-12 members to be a joke. Private correspondence between Menzel and alleged MJ-12 associate Hillenkoetter indicates that the two barely knew each other.

Menzel's secret government work does not significantly differentiate him from many other elite scientists of his generation. Nor is it surprising that he counted among his friends other leading scientists who also had secret official connections. Menzel's career in ufology is best seen as a case history in pathological science. More substantive accusations come from outside ufology, in a damning indictment by Ian Seymour, another prober into Menzel's secret life:

Menzel led a double life. The crusty astronomer was a high-ranking agent of the National Security Agency. . . . He used his position to blacken the reputations and damage the careers of scientific opponents, produced fake research supporting his masters, [and] betrayed his president [Eisenhower]. . . . The seediest part of his career began in 1960. Menzel—still a serving [intelligence] officer—offered to supply presidential candidate John F. Kennedy with secret data on intelligence activity during Ike's administration. . . . The files now reveal a sordid stack of letters to JFK, abusing rivals and supposed friends, and urging positions of authority be given to the selfless Menzel. Many were.

Menzel was a good astronomer, yet he sacrificed honor as a scientist to political paymasters.

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MICHALAK CE2.

→ See Falcon Lake CE2.

MJ-12 DOCUMENT.

→ See Dark Side; Hoaxes; and Menzel, Donald Howard.

At 11:30 on the morning of August 15, 1950, Nicholas Mariana and his secretary Virginia Raunig were inspecting the Great Falls, Montana, baseball stadium—Mariana was general manager of the city's Class D team—in preparation for the game to be played that afternoon. Mariana walked up the grandstand to check the wind direction. As he looked toward the north-northwestern sky and the Anaconda Copper Company smokestack, he spotted two fast-moving bright lights "like two new dimes in the sky." A few seconds' observation convinced him they were not airplanes. Shouting to his secretary, he rushed to his car, parked 60 feet away, and retrieved his 16-mm movie camera from the glove compartment. Using a telephoto lens, he started filming.

As Mariana would recall:

I . . . set the camera at f-22, picked up the objects in the view finders, and pressed the trigger. As the film clicked through I could see the objects moving southeast behind the General Mills grain buildings and the black water tank south of the ball park. I filmed the objects until they disappeared into the blue sky behind the water tank. . . . Suddenly directly behind us—northeast—two jets shot by with a roar and we almost jumped out of our shoes.

The objects I saw were very bright and about 10,000 feet in the air. They appeared to be a shiny bright metal—like polished silver. There were two of them and they appeared to be about 50 yards apart. Both were the same size and were moving at the same rate of speed, which was much slower than the jets which shot by shortly after. I filmed the discs. . . . The discs appeared to be spinning, like a top, and then they picked up speed and disappeared. They appeared to be about 50 feet across and about three or four feet thick. I could not see—nor do the pictures show—any exhaust, wings or any kind of fuselage. I could see no cabin. There was no sound . . . [and] no odor. . . . The whole scene took from 15 to 25 seconds.

The *Great Falls Leader* reported the story that afternoon, followed by the *Great Falls Tribune* the next day. In the next few weeks Mariana showed his color film to local groups such as the Central Roundtable Athletic Club. On September 13, with Mariana's permission, *Leader* reporter Clifton Sullivan informed the Air Materiel Command (AMC), Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Dayton, Ohio, of Mariana's film. On October 4 Capt. John P. Brynildsen, district commander for the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) at Great Falls (now Malmstrom) AFB, interviewed Mariana and was given the film.

According to Brynildsen's memo, Mariana specifically mentioned seeing jets moments after the sighting. The next evening the officer told a *Tribune* writer, "I



picked up about eight feet of film from Mariana." But the following day, when he submitted the footage to AMC headquarters, he wrote in his transmission letter that he was sending "approximately fifteen feet of moving picture film taken by Mr. Nicholas Mariana." This confusion about precisely how much film the Air Force took has never been cleared up.

On October 10 the *Dayton Daily News* quoted AMC personnel as saying, "The film is too dark to distinguish any recognizable objects. For this reason it will not be sent on to Washington headquarters. The Air Force has no interest in the film. The film will be returned to the owner." Eight days later, in a cover letter sent with the film, Lt. Col. Ray Ward Taylor, the AMC's chief public information officer, told Mariana that "our photoanalysts were unable to find on it anything identifiable of an unusual nature." According to **Edward J. Ruppelt**, who the following year would reorganize and revitalize the Air Force's largely moribund **Project Grudge**, "in 1950 there was no interest in the UFO so, after a quick viewing, Project Grudge had written them off as 'the reflections from two F-94 jet fighters that were in the area'."

As soon as he received the film, Mariana discovered that the first part of it—the part that showed the spinning discs most clearly—was missing. He thought that the film in its current form was short about 35 frames (0.9 feet) from the original. Persons who had seen the original backed up Mariana's charge. The footage was said to show large UFO images, each with a notch or band along its outer edge. The objects were rotating in unison. The rest of the film—the version that would be the focus of a controversy that would go on for decades afterwards—displayed images consisting only of bright white dots. The Air Force denied it had tampered with the film.

In the January 1951 issue of *Cosmopolitan*, Bob Considine reported that the Air Force had determined the objects to be two F-94s that "had landed at the nearby field at 11:33 a.m." The following May, Mariana filed suit against Considine; because the piece was titled "The Disgraceful Flying Saucer Hoax," he charged, he was being called, at least implicitly, a "liar, prankster, half-wit, crank, publicity hound and fanatic." He pursued the suit without success until September 1955.

**A second look.** In the wake of the **Washington National radar/visual case** of late July 1952, Gen. John A. Samford ordered **Project Blue Book**—as the Air Force UFO project was now code-named—to take a new look at the evidence. Capt. Ruppelt reopened the case of the Montana film. Still unhappy about the missing footage, Mariana greeted the new interest without enthusiasm but eventually agreed to let the Air Force see the film again, provided that the Air Force sign an agreement to return it intact this time.

Once it had the film in hand, Blue Book dispatched an officer Mariana knew and trusted, Lt. Peter Marquez, to interview him at length. This interview took place on January 7, 1953. Meanwhile the AMC photo laboratory had concluded the objects could not be balloons, birds, or meteors. The possibility that they were F-94s—Great Falls AFB attested that two such aircraft were in the vicinity and about

to land, just as Mariana had reported—was considered and rejected. “The two jets just weren’t anywhere close to where the two UFOs had been,” Ruppelt would write. “Next we studied each individual light and both appeared too steady to be reflections. We drew a blank on the Montana Movie—it was an unknown.”

On January 14, in Washington, D.C., a group of prominent scientists met under CIA sponsorship to consider the Air Force’s UFO data and to make recommendations on future policy. That first morning the **Robertson panel** (so called because it was chaired by California Institute of Technology physicist H. P. Robertson) viewed the Montana film along with another taken in 1952 by U.S. Navy photographer Delbert C. Newhouse (see **Utah Film**). Nothing in this viewing dissuaded the already skeptical group from “strongly suspecting” that the objects at Great Falls were simply “reflections of aircraft known to have been in the area.”

**The Baker analysis.** In December 1953 Albert M. Chop, at one time the Pentagon’s civilian UFO spokesman, wrote Mariana to ask if his film could be used in *Unidentified Flying Objects*, a documentary movie to be produced by Greene-Rouse Motion Picture Studios. Within four months Greene-Rouse had secured the rights and was producing a script with former Blue Book operatives Ruppelt and Dewey Fournet serving as consultants. Mariana played himself, and on October 1, 1954, the incident was recreated in front of cameras in Missoula, Montana, where Mariana now resided.

Besides being an adviser on the UFO documentary, Chop was an employee of Douglas Aircraft. So was Robert M. L. Baker, Jr., a scientist with a computer and engineering background. Through Chop, Baker learned of the Montana film, and in 1954 he proceeded to analyze it, using a 16-mm copy provided by the Air Technical Intelligence Center, which oversaw Blue Book’s operations, and a 35-mm copy provided by Greene-Rouse. Baker secured additional observational information from Mariana and conducted other interviews.

By early spring 1956 he finished a detailed technical analysis that concluded that the F-94 hypothesis was “quite strained”; still, he wrote, “despite the considerable amount of effort spent on the analysis of the evidence and circumstances . . . no clearcut conclusion can be brought out.” In 1958 he would tell the U.S. House’s Committee on Science and Astronautics that the F-94 explanation was devoid of “merit.” That same year, in a scientific journal, he would make a bolder declaration: that “on the basis of the photographic evidence, the images cannot be explained by any presently known natural phenomenon.”

Nonetheless, debunkers would continue to insist on the aircraft hypothesis’ correctness.

**The Condon Committee investigation.** In 1966 the Air Force entered into a contract with the University of Colorado to conduct what was billed as an independent, objective UFO study under the direction of physicist Edward U. Condon (see **University of Colorado UFO Project**). The project, known informally as the Condon



Committee, reinvestigated some older cases, among them that of the Montana film. One of the committee's investigators, eventually to be fired for the pro-UFO attitudes developed in the course of his field work, was psychologist David R. Saunders. Saunders would observe that Mariana's was the "one sighting of all time that did more than any other single case to convince me that there is something to the UFO problem."

Saunders worked with another full-time committee investigator, physical chemist Roy Craig. Saunders collected and analyzed relevant documents, everything from newspaper clippings to Air Force memos to weather records, and visited the site. Craig corresponded with Mariana and later interviewed him, Raunig, and others in person.

In the "Photographic Case Studies" part (section IV, chapter 3) of the Condon Committee's final report, University of Arizona astronomer and photoanalyst William K. Hartmann, who draws heavily on Baker's work, states:

There are several independent arguments against airplane reflections. (1) Short-term variations in image size (correlated with brightness), time scale ca. 1 sec., are typically not more than  $\pm 5\%$ . *A priori* considerations of aircraft stability and empirical observations by Baker indicate that it is very unlikely that two aircraft could maintain such constant reflections over not only the 16 sec. and the 20-degree azimuth arc photographed but also the minimum of 50 sec. visually observed. I have confirmed this by studying aircraft visually in the vicinity of Tucson airports; in at least a dozen cases none has been seen to maintain a constant or unidentifiable reflection as long as 16 sec.

Hartmann concludes, "The case remains unexplained. . . . [T]he images on the film are difficult to reconcile with aircraft or other known phenomena, although aircraft cannot be entirely ruled out." He does not explain his reasons for this last bit of hedging.

The 35 or so frames Mariana reported to be missing have never surfaced. If he and others who say they saw clear, unambiguous spinning discs in the film are telling the truth, the footage—assuming it has not been lost or destroyed—presumably remains in Air Force hands.

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MOORE CASE

## MOODY ABDUCTION CASE.

→ See Walton Abduction Case.

## MOON AND UFOS.

→ See Extraterrestrial Hypothesis and Ufology.

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## MOORE CASE

At 11:30 p.m. on November 6, 1957, in the midst of a UFO sighting wave that had begun four days earlier in Levelland, Texas (see **Levelland Sightings**), 28-year-old plasterer Olden Moore was driving west of Montville, Ohio, when he saw a lighted object moving from right to left (eastward) through the night sky in front of him. Moore subsequently related:

It stopped when it got to the center of my side of the windshield, and then it split into two pieces. One part went straight upward. The part that remained seemed brighter than ever and kept getting bigger. When it got to be about the size of a sheet of paper, I pulled the car into a side road and got out. It seemed to be headed straight at the car. I had no idea what it was. The color changed, as it approached, from bright white to a green haze, and then to blue-green as it stopped about 200 feet above the field. I didn't hear any sound until it started to settle



slowly to the ground. Then I noticed a whirring sound, something like an electric meter, only a little deeper.

The UFO came down 500 feet from him, and for the next 15 minutes Moore watched it without attempting to approach it. It was circular and shaped like a covered dish 50 feet in diameter and 50 feet high. A sharp, steeplelike cone shot up from the top midsection. The UFO was surrounded by a bluish green haze, like a fog. The color pulsed slowly, alternating between bright and dim. When the haze was dim, Moore could see the object's surface, which looked as if it were made of the same material as "mirrored sun-glasses."

Finally he decided to walk toward it but about halfway there decided to get his wife. He drove five miles to his home, but by the time the couple got back, the UFO was gone.

The next morning Mrs. Moore notified County Sheriff Louis Robusky, who came to interview Moore. Early in the afternoon Lake County Civilian Defense Director Kenneth Locke searched the area, finding "footprints" that "came from nowhere and went nowhere. . . . They had a sort of heel print, then some little holes in the ground, like golf shoes would make. But nobody around there has golf shoes." Near the "footprints" were two perfectly formed three-foot-deep holes, six inches in diameter. Locke left to retrieve a Geiger counter. "When we returned," he said, "we got a reading of about 150 microroentgens [per hour; a normal reading is 15] in the center of an area about 50 feet in diameter, tapering to 20 or 30 microroentgens at the perimeter. This indicated that the activity was not caused by minerals in the ground." To a representative of the **Aerial Phenomena Research Organization** (APRO), Locke said, "A foreign object landed in that field."

That same morning, the seventh, Mildred Wenzel, who lived half a mile from the landing site, found "strange pockmarks" on the roof and windshield of her car, which had been parked outside all night. She decided to drive to Chardon to talk with Sheriff Robusky about the matter. On her way she passed the field where the object had come down, and there she spotted the sheriff and Locke. When she stopped to ask them what was going on, Locke ran his Geiger counter over her car and measured 35 to 40 microroentgens.

Mrs. Wenzel said that late the previous evening "something funny" had happened with her television reception. "I couldn't get any of the TV stations on my set," she said. "They were all blurred." At 6:30 the next morning an area woman, Mrs. E. A. Markell, "saw an object or space ship," which she reported to the sheriff's office. "It was so bright that it blurred my eyes. It was like setting on the ledges and then it went right up. It was round in shape, very low and much larger than an airplane. Odd in shape. Only there a few minutes. It definitely was not the sun, moon, or an airplane. There was no vapor trails or noise."

**Taken to Washington?** Not long afterwards Moore disappeared for a few days. When he returned, he refused to say where he had been. He told local Civil Defense officials that he had left town to escape ridicule and harassment. Not long afterwards,

however, his wife told friends that the Air Force had taken him to Washington, D.C. Asked about this by a reporter, Moore said only, "I talked to high officials. I was sworn to secrecy. I won't say where I was."

In March 1962 *Saucer News* editor James W. Moseley interviewed Lt. Col. Robert Friend of **Project Blue Book**. In the course of the conversation Moseley asked him about Olden Moore. As he wrote in a subsequent account, Moore

began claiming that . . . he was taken to Washington and detained involuntarily for three days of questioning. He made these statements to friends and eventually on tape; and this tape was sent to a larger circle of saucer enthusiasts. According to Col. Friend, the Air Force went to interview this man and ask him politely about these wild claims. The fellow admitted in private that they were not true. Apparently he had merely strayed from home for a few days and needed a good story to tell his wife.

Friend's charge prompted a response from ufologist C. W. Fitch. Fitch, who had come to know Moore after his encounter, characterized him as an honest man deeply involved in church activities and unlikely to fabricate either a UFO sighting or an encounter with officialdom.

Moore claimed that on the evening of November 10, four days after his sighting, Sheriff Robusky, a deputy, and an Air Force officer showed up at his home and asked him if he would go to Youngstown, Ohio, to be interviewed by military representatives. They drove Moore to the field where he had had his UFO encounter—Moore thought this was so strange that he became frightened—and placed him aboard a military helicopter with two Air Force officers. He was flown to Youngstown, interviewed for some time, then flown back to the field at 11 p.m.

Exactly a week later an Air Force car with two officers came to Moore's house. He was told they were taking him to Washington for extended questioning. They drove him to a waiting airplane, which stopped briefly at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, to pick up one officer and drop one off. In Washington Moore was housed in a downtown building, which from his description Fitch later surmised to be the United States Court House. He was kept in the building and was even fed in a private dining room there. Though he was treated courteously, the officers watched him at all times, including when he slept.

Even more remarkable was Moore's assertion that toward the end of his stay (during which he was interrogated by several different groups of people, who asked him essentially the same questions), he was shown slides of, in Fitch's words, "various UFO still photographs. They even ran off a UFO movie film, which had apparently been taken from inside a military plane." The officers told him that since these objects were neither American nor Soviet, they must be from another planet. The military had never admitted this publicly because it did not yet have all the answers. Moore signed a document swearing him to secrecy.



Moore never discussed any of this in a public forum, but in early 1959 he told the story on tape to a local UFO buff. In no time copies of the tape were in circulation, and not long afterwards two men from Wright-Patterson called on the Moores and tried to persuade him that the object he had seen was nothing more than a large fireball. Moore was unconvinced.

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## MOORE, WILLIAM LEONARD.

→ See Crashes and Retrievals of UFOs and Dark Side.

## MOROCCO SIGHTINGS

On the night of September 18-19, 1976, numerous residents of Morocco reported seeing unusual aerial phenomena. On the 24th the American embassy in Rabat, Morocco's capital city, cabled this message to the State Department in Washington, D.C.:

1. Yesterday, the 23rd of September [deleted] requested to see me at 1000 hours the same day. When he arrived [deleted] had sent him to discuss the sightings of unidentified flying objects (UFOs) over Morocco on the night of 18-19 September. According to [deleted] the Gendarmerie had received calls from Frog Agadir, the Marrakech Area, Casablanca, Rabat, Kenitra, and other areas reporting the sighting of UFOs between the hours of 0100 and 0130. . . . Reports from these widely separate locations were remarkably similar, i.e., that the object

was on a generally southwest to northeast course, it was a silvery luminous circular shape and gave off intermittent trails of bright sparks and fragments. And made no noise. He promised to provide further details today . . . and asked that we furnish any information that we might have on these sightings.

I promised that we would do what we could.

2. Today . . . [deleted] met with Datt and gave him a summary of the sightings. [Deleted] also permitted Datt to look at drawings of the UFO prepared by various individuals, including himself, who had sighted the UFO.

3. The times of the sightings varied from 0100 to 0200 hours on the morning of 19 September. With the majority of them occurring between 0100 and 0130 hours. Sightings were reported from Agadir Kalaa-Sraghna, Essaouira, Casablanca, Rabat, Kenitra, Meknes, and the Fez region. There was general agreement that the UFO was proceeding on an approximately south to north course. Generally parallel to the Moroccan Atlantic Coast, at an estimated altitude of 1,000 meters, and that there was absolutely no sound from the UFO.

4. Descriptions of the UFO fell into two general categories, i.e., a type of silver-colored luminous flattened [illegible] disc-shaped [sic], or a large luminous tube-shaped object. Observers reported that the object intermittently emitted bright sparks from the rear.

5. [Deleted] said he was sent to brief Datt on the subject because he had himself sighted the UFO while returning from the city of Kenitra at about 0115 in the morning. He described the UFO as flying parallel to the coast at a relative slow speed as if it were an aircraft preparing to land. It first appeared to him as a disc-shaped object, but as it came closer he saw it as a luminous tubular-shaped object.

6. I frankly do not know what to make of these sightings, although I find intriguing the similarity of descriptions reported from widely dispersed locations. In any event, I wish to be able to respond promptly to [deleted]'s request for information. And would appreciate anything you can do to assist me in this.

A reply came in October from Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. The delay may have been occasioned by his seeking a briefing on the subject, presumably from the Air Force, in the interim. Kissinger's response cited *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects* (1969), known informally as the Condon report, after physicist Edward U. Condon, who headed the **University of Colorado UFO project**. "At present," he said, "there is no USG [U.S. government] agency studying this matter, the view being that such sightings . . . can be attributed to natural causes and that further study is unwarranted." He went on:



Although there is no major meteor shower in September, the sporadic meteor rate in the northern hemisphere is at a maximum in the early morning and in the autumn months. But meteors are usually visible at an altitude of around 100 km, not 1 km. However, subjective estimates of the height of such sightings are usually too low. The flat trajectory SW to NE could conceivably be compatible with a meteor, or decaying satellite. Tangential trajectories are not the most likely for meteors, but are not impossible. It is unlikely from the description that the event could have been a reflection from a polar orbiting satellite.

Kissinger did not add that "from the description" it was just as unlikely that the object was a meteor or satellite debris. Furthermore, the duration of the sighting ruled out these explanations.

Coincidentally or otherwise, a dramatic UFO incident took place the same night—though a few hours earlier owing to time-zone differences—over Iran (see Iran CE2).

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## MUROC AIR BASE SIGHTINGS

At 9:30 a.m. on July 8, 1947, as 1st Lt. Joseph C. McHenry was walking to his office at Muroc Air Base (now Edwards Air Force Base) in southern California, he observed two silvery disc-shaped objects moving at 300 mph in straight, level flight and at 8000 feet altitude. They were flying against the prevailing wind and heading north toward the Mojave Desert. McHenry called to three other persons, but by the time he got their attention, the discs were disappearing in the distance. Then a third UFO appeared from the same direction as the first two. It flew in tight circles as it shot toward the desert. He told Air Force investigators:

From my actual observation, the object circled in too tight a circle and [on] too severe a plane to be any aircraft that I know of. It could not have been any type of bird because of the reflection that was created when the object reached certain altitudes. The object could not have been a local weather balloon for it is impossible that a weather balloon would stay at the same altitude as long and circle in such a consistent nature as did the above-mentioned object.

Forty minutes later, while warming up the engines of an XP-84 aircraft, test pilot Maj. J. C. Wise glanced north and saw what he first took to be a weather balloon, then realized it could not be because it was flying in the face of the wind. Moreover, even if it had been flying with the wind, no balloon could be moving at this object's speed, which he estimated to be over 200 mph. Moving from east to west, the object was spherical and yellowish-white in color.

Around noon, as officers and technicians at Rogers Dry Lake, east of Muroc, watched their aircraft about to perform a seat-ejection experiment, a round object of a white aluminum color appeared under the airplanes, which were at 20,000 feet. "Our first impression was that a premature ejection of the seat and dummy had occurred," they told investigators,

but this was not the case. The object . . . was falling at three times the rate observed for the test parachute, which ejected 30 seconds after we first saw the object. As the object fell it drifted north of due west against the prevailing wind. . . . As this object descended through a low enough level to permit observation of its lateral silhouette, it presented a distinct oval-shaped outline, with two projections on the upper surface which might have been thick fins or knobs. They crossed each other at intervals, suggesting either rotation or oscillation of a slow type. No smoke, flames, propeller arcs, engine noise, or other plausible or visible means of propulsion were noted. The color was silver, resembling an aluminum-painted fabric, and did not appear as dense as a parachute canopy. When the object dropped to a level such that it came into line of vision of the mountain tops, it was lost to the vision of the observers.

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At 4 p.m. a pilot flying an F-51 at 20,000 feet 40 miles south of Muroc encountered a "flat object of a light-reflecting nature" at some distance above him. It had neither wings nor fins, and his aircraft would not ascend high enough to approach it closely. Local air bases confirmed that they had no planes in the area.

In his **Project Blue Book** memoir Capt. **Edward J. Ruppelt** wrote that the Muroc events were what caused the Air Force to "take a deep interest in UFOs." Another who was impressed was astronomer **J. Allen Hynek**, who in 1948 would sign on as scientific consultant to **Project Sign**. Hynek recalled "wondering why the Air Force had not paid much greater attention" to the sightings. "The witnesses were certainly excellent, independent military men describing the most unusual sighting on a clear sunny day. What more could the Air Force want?" The official explanation is that the objects were "balloons."

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## NASH-FORTENBERRY SIGHTING

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Eight thousand feet above Chesapeake Bay, at 8:12 p.m. on the clear evening of July 14, 1952, Capt. William B. Nash and his copilot, First Officer William H. Fortenberry, aboard a Pan American Airway DC-4, saw six crimson dots at 30 degrees. The dots, streaking in their direction, were at 2000 feet altitude, about a mile lower in the sky than the airliner. As they got closer, they resolved into reddish orange circles, apparently 100 feet in diameter and 15 feet thick, with sharply defined edges. Nash would recall that the objects "were holding a narrow echelon formation—a stepped-up line tilted slightly to our right, with the leader at the lowest point and each following craft slightly higher."

The lead object suddenly slowed, so suddenly, in fact, that the two behind it wavered and nearly overran it. Within seconds the discs were almost underneath the DC-4 and slightly to the right, and in unison "they flipped on edge," in Nash's words,

the sides to the left of us going up and the glowing surfaces facing right. Though the bottom surfaces did not become clearly visible, we had the impression that they were unlighted. The exposed edges, also unlighted, appeared to be about 15 feet thick, and the top surface at least seemed flat. In shape and proportion they were much like coins.



While all were in the edgewise position, the last five slid over and past the leader so that the echelon was now tail foremost, so to speak, the top or last craft now being nearest to our position. Then, without any arc or swerve at all, they all flipped back together to the flat attitude and darted off in a direction that formed a sharp angle with their first course, holding their new formation. . . .

Immediately after these six lined away, two more objects just like them darted out from behind and under our airplane at the same altitude as the others.

When the two new UFOs—which were even brighter than the others—joined the formation, the lights of all eight blinked out momentarily, then came on again. Together they sped westward north of Newport News, Virginia, before climbing in a graceful 45-degree arc above the airliner's altitude. At that point the lights of each went out in irregular sequence.

The entire sighting had occurred over a mere 15 seconds. Using charts and navigation equipment, Nash and Fortenberry calculated that the UFOs had traveled 50 miles in that time. That meant, they deduced, that the objects had been moving at 12,000 mph. Nash radioed in to report what had happened.

The plane landed in Miami some hours later, and in the morning a team from the nearest Air Force Office of Special Investigations detachment, at McDill Air Force Base, Tampa, interviewed the two men at first separately, then together. Nash remembered, "The investigators . . . advised us that they already had seven other reports. One was from a lieutenant commander and his wife. . . . They described a formation of red discs traveling at high speed and making immediate direction changes without turn radius."

At the conclusion of the Air Force investigation, the case was declared to be unexplained. An effort by debunker **Donald H. Menzel** to explain the sighting as caused by city lights reflecting off "stratified clouds or inversion layers of temperature and/or humidity" fell afoul of weather records attesting to the absence of clouds, inversions, or haze.

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# NATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE ON AERIAL PHENOMENA

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AERIAL  
PHENOMENA

In the spring of 1956, Clara L. John, editor of the **contactee**-oriented newsletter *Little Listening Post*, organized an informal monthly Flying Saucer Discussion Group in Washington, D.C. Among those who attended on occasion was maverick physicist T. Townsend Brown. Brown had been drawn to the UFO phenomenon for what it might reveal about the technology of interstellar flight. Over the years Brown had developed his own theories about how the force of gravity might be overcome, and he was convinced UFOs used an antigravity propulsion system. Perhaps, he thought, "surveillance with a nationwide or worldwide reporting service" would yield "a scientific explanation of [the UFOs'] method of propulsion, based on light emission and performance patterns."

Brown was not the only one thinking about a UFO supergroup. Mrs. John took note of talk of "some central research organization or 'Foundation' probably located in Washington, for coordinating this whole UFO study." As early as 1953 A. M. Sonnabend, president of the Hotel Corporation of America, urged UFO author and retired Marine Corps Maj. **Donald E. Keyhoe** to form such a group, and other influential individuals echoed the suggestion. Keyhoe, however, was otherwise engaged.

Encouraged by such expressions of support, Brown filed incorporation papers on August 29 for the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP). (They were granted on October 24, NICAP's first legal day of existence.) Keyhoe agreed to serve on its Board of Governors. So did a number of prominent or well-credentialed citizens, including Rear Adm. Delmer S. Fahrney, former head of the Navy's guided-missile program.

Within two months, however, NICAP was near collapse, the victim of Brown's inflated ambitions and unrealistic sense of how much money such an organization could raise. At a January 1957 board meeting, when Brown, already NICAP director, nominated himself to be chairman of its board of directors as well, Keyhoe demanded his resignation, charging that—in addition to his failings as a manager—Brown's ideas about antigravity threatened NICAP's scientific credibility. The next day the board accepted Brown's resignation.

Fahrney was elected board chairman. He then asked Keyhoe to accept the post of director. Keyhoe agreed. In a January 16 press conference that would receive widespread press coverage, Fahrney declared that UFOs appeared to be under intelligent control but not by Americans or Russians.

The statement was carried in many newspapers, but Fahrney's stay in ufology would be brief. He left NICAP on April 10 for reasons characterized only as



“urgent” and “personal” and never disclosed publicly. According to NICAP insider Ted Bloecher, Fahrney was concerned over his wife’s serious illness. Beyond that he found that his UFO interests placed him at the receiving end of jokes from friends, colleagues, and reporters.

Fahrney’s departure notwithstanding, NICAP’s board grew to include other prominent and respected individuals, among them Vice Adm. Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter, the first director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Boundlessly optimistic, Keyhoe told a newspaper reporter in February 1957, “The way [NICAP is] growing now we expect to have well over 100,000 members by the end of the year.” Keyhoe reduced dues from \$15 to \$7.50, and by July the first issue of *The U.F.O. Investigator*, 32 pages long, appeared. Soon, reflecting its director’s enthusiasms, the magazine’s pages were openly and sympathetically discussing the **extraterrestrial hypothesis** of UFO origin (though a formal NICAP endorsement, by majority board vote, did not take place until 1960). It was also blasting contactees, accusing the Air Force of covering up UFO evidence, and calling for congressional hearings.

By 1958 NICAP had 5000 members and numerous financial problems. The *Investigator* was reduced to eight pages, and as major funding proved elusive and Keyhoe’s own financial management proved inept, the organization often teetered on the verge of collapse. It sent out frantic letters regularly warning of its imminent disintegration, and members regularly responded with just enough money to keep it lurching forward until the next crisis. The dedicated Keyhoe paid many of NICAP’s expenses out of his own pocket.

For all its efforts, for all that the Air Force regarded it as a threat to the credibility of its repeated public assurances that there was nothing to UFO reports, NICAP was never able to attract more than brief and sporadic congressional interest in its effort to end UFO secrecy. But for many middle-class Americans and others who were intrigued by UFOs but repelled by ufology’s fringe aspects, it served as a sober forum for UFO reporting, inquiry, investigation, and speculation.

A revival of interest in UFOs in the mid-1960s, occasioned by a dramatic increase in reports between 1964 and 1967, helped NICAP’s fortunes, and in 1966 NICAP attained its peak membership: 14,000. The organization lent its support to the Air Force-sponsored **University of Colorado UFO Project**, headed by physicist Edward U. Condon, who oversaw what was advertised as an objective scientific analysis of the UFO problem. In September 1967, however, as Condon’s true views (that UFOs were nonsense) became apparent, NICAP ceased passing on reports to the committee. In early 1968, after repeated but futile efforts to have its questions answered and its concerns addressed, NICAP broke entirely with the project. NICAP announced that it was “greatly expanding its investigation-evaluation system. New committees and special investigators will be added. . . . We intend to do all that the Colorado Project was supposed to do. This will be a big job—the biggest we have ever had.”

None of this was to happen. In one of its last significant contributions to UFO study, NICAP released two well-regarded monographs, *Strange Effects from UFOs* (1969) and *UFOs: A New Look* (1969), based in large part on the organization's often first-rate field investigations. But the many problems associated with Keyhoe's incompetent management were about to catch up with the organization and send it into a tailspin.

By now NICAP's staff were in near-revolt over what they perceived as Keyhoe's incompetence and authoritarianism. Assistant director Gordon I. R. Lore, Jr., alerted the Board of Directors to the growing crisis and urged the hiring of a business director to bring order out of the "unbelievable state of confusion" to which Keyhoe's failure to keep adequate books and records had brought NICAP. In the summer of 1969, Lore secured permission from a heretofore-alooof Keyhoe—who only rarely left his home in rural Virginia to visit the office—to fire five of the organization's eight employees as a cost-saving measure. On October 27 he wrote board and executive committee member Joseph B. Hartranft, Jr., an 11-page, single-spaced letter outlining NICAP's difficulties.

Some of those difficulties were not of NICAP's making. The much-publicized Condon report (formally *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects*), released in January 1969, dismissed UFOs as unworthy of further scientific attention. That, coupled with a sighting dearth that would continue until October 1973 and the closing of NICAP's old nemesis **Project Blue Book** in December 1969, diminished public interest in UFOs. NICAP membership had plummeted to fewer than 5000.

Facing the severest financial crisis in the organization's history—and knowing that board members could be held personally responsible—the executive committee convened in Washington on December 3, 1969. Keyhoe and Lore were fired, and Joseph Bryan III was made acting director while Hartranft searched for a permanent replacement. Stuart Nixon was appointed secretary-treasurer. Keyhoe and Lore were not informed of the meeting until afterwards.

Lore learned of his termination on the morning of December 5, via telegram from Hartranft. When he went to the office that day to collect his belongings, he would complain in an open letter to NICAP associates, "I found that all my desks had been completely cleaned out; all of the NICAP files had been confiscated beyond my reach; and all of the locks on the doors had been changed." Four days later Richard Hall, who had been assistant director until September 1967, canceled his membership and circulated a protest letter.

Though he had no background in ufology, the new director, John L. Acuff, was an experienced manager. A bare-bones NICAP limped on, with an ever decreasing membership. In 1978 Acuff resigned, leaving the organization in the hands of Alan Hall, amid lurid—and baseless—charges in some quarters that a CIA conspiracy had undermined NICAP. In 1980 the last issue of the *Investigator* came out. NICAP was disbanded, and eventually its files were turned over to the Chicago-based J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies.



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NEWARK VALLEY CE3.

→ See Close Encounters of the Third Kind.

The Argosy cargo plane left Blenheim, New Zealand, and flew along the Kaikoura (east) coast of New Zealand's South Island on its way to Christchurch just after midnight on December 21, 1978. Then at around 12:30 a.m., white lights "similar to landing lights," in the words of Capt. John B. Randle, appeared in the sky above the mouth of the Clarence River. Randle contacted Wellington Air Traffic Control, which confirmed that it had five unidentified, oscillating objects on its scope. The lights were also seen from the ground by observers in the Blenheim area.

Sometime later, at around 3:30, Wellington traffic controllers contacted Capt. Vern Powell, pilot of another freight aircraft about to make the run between Blenheim and Christchurch, and alerted him to the position of the objects, which had stayed in the same general location now for some 45 minutes. When he ascended to 7500 feet, he spotted one light through the clouds. It was white and tinged with red.

The object followed Powell's plane as it headed south. Wellington radar tracked it for 12 miles before it disappeared from the screen. Then, as they neared Christchurch Airport, Powell and his copilot Ian Pirie noticed a return on their on-board radar UFO. By the next sweep it had moved a mile closer to them. It kept coming toward them at an incredible speed, something like—Powell thought—8000 mph.

As the crew searched the skies without seeing anything, radar indicated that at 35 miles from them the object streaked off to the aircraft's left. It was suddenly gone from radar, but for the first time Powell and Pirie saw something: a flashing light in front of them.

These reports were afforded headline treatment in New Zealand and Australia media. A reporter for Melbourne's Channel 0 vacationing in New Zealand was assigned to do a story on the Powell sighting. The reporter, Quentin Fogarty, hired a camera crew, consisting of David Crockett and his wife Ngaire, and rented a four-engine Argosy turboprop freighter. On December 30 Fogarty, the Crocketts, Capt. William Startup, and First Officer Robert Guard flew to Wellington. There Fogarty interviewed the traffic-control personnel who had tracked the objects. The plane left Wellington at 11:46 p.m. on its way to Christchurch.

At 12:10 a.m., over Cook Strait south of Wellington, Fogarty spoke into the camera, "We're now approaching the Clarence River area where the heaviest concentration of UFOs was sighted on December 21. We're at an altitude of 14,000 feet, and we're on exactly the same route taken by Capt. Powell when he encountered those mysterious objects. It's a beautiful clear night outside, and naturally we'll be looking out for anything unusual." Fogarty did not expect to see anything, however.

At that moment Startup left his seat and came back to urge his passengers to get up to the flight deck, but Crockett wanted to do another take. Fogarty unhappily agreed to do so. When that was done, he dashed up the stairs. There



Startup and Guard were staring out the right front of the plane. Above the lights of Kaikoura township were six or seven other lights. Bright, pulsating, and enigmatic, they faded away, then came back into view. Crockett started filming.

The pilots had already spoken with Wellington. It had picked up the objects. As Fogarty would recall:

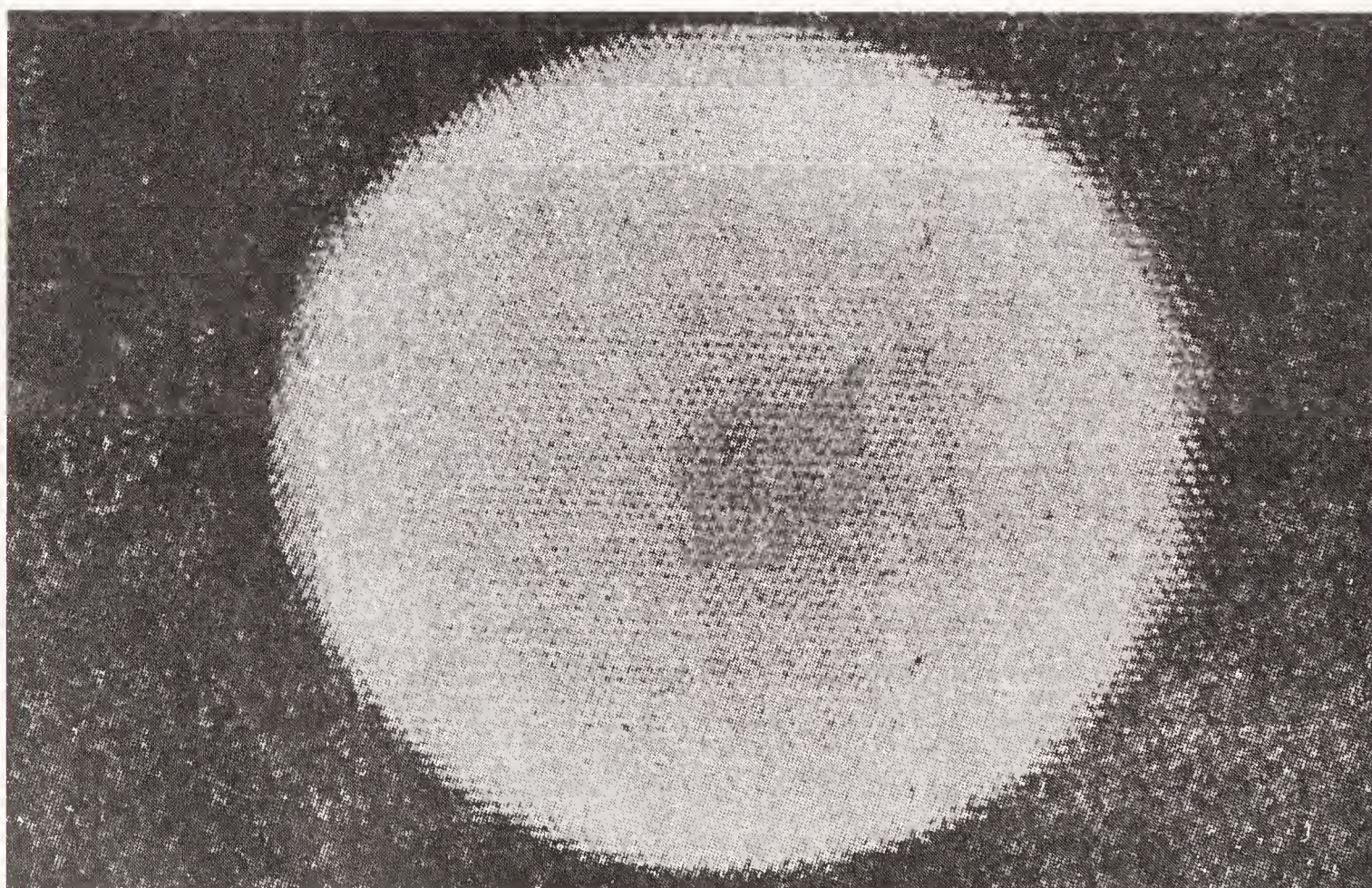
I gazed at the lights and thought they looked like Chinese lanterns strung up in the trees that lined the town. But these lights were much higher than the trees and closer inspection revealed they were not above the town but out to sea.

It was now 12:30. Wellington was tracking a target a mile behind the aircraft. It stayed on the screen for about a minute without ever moving. Another, this one at three o'clock relative to the plane, appeared. Wellington notified Startup, "There's a strong target right in formation with you. . . . Your target has doubled in size."

On two occasions Startup effected a wrenching 360-degree turn in a vain attempt to see the object being tracked behind them.

When the plane landed at Christchurch, Startup asked his passengers if they would like to join him on the flight back to Blenheim. Ngaire Crockett refused, but after some discussion Fogarty, Crockett, and another journalist, Dennis Grant, agreed to do so. The plane flew out at 2:15, and within two minutes aircraft radar picked up a target 20 nautical miles away.

One of a series of mysterious lights filmed by a camera crew investigating the phenomena while flying over New Zealand in 1978. (Fortean Picture Library)





As they passed through the clouds, Crockett resumed filming the night sky. Fogarty briefly saw two bright lights but was unsure if they were UFOs or reflections off the water. Then Startup saw one of them. At first he thought it was the moon, then realized the moon was behind him. Crockett trained his camera on it. The object paced them until, when they were 37 miles from Christchurch, Startup turned 90 degrees and flew toward it, but it moved to the right and vanished from radar almost instantaneously.

It had also disappeared from Wellington radar, though that was hardly surprising, since it was out of radar range. Meanwhile other radars in the area, both ground and air, were picking up targets sporadically. "It seemed that the objects, whatever they were, had the ability to appear on radar as they saw fit," Fogarty reflected. "It was unnerving, to put it mildly."

The object came back into view. Fogarty continued speaking into the tape recorder, "It's going down. It's now moving towards the front of the aircraft. Or maybe we're moving towards it. I can't really tell. . . . It's now practically level with us . . . an incredible sight . . . now just below us, in front and below." The object dropped out of sight to the plane's right, moving at a fantastic speed.

They were now well past Blenheim and bound for Antarctica. Startup turned around. Radio traffic from Wellington reported continuing radar tracks and visual sightings, but by now everyone on the plane was feeling numb and exhausted.

Soon the UFOs were back. To the plane's port side two pulsating lights suddenly appeared. "The one fell at an incredible speed leaving a trail of light and settled into a rolling, turning pattern among a number of other lights," Fogarty wrote. This sequence, the climax of the night's events, was captured on film.

The New Zealand film generated massive attention and an equal amount of controversy. The images were "explained" variously as Venus, Jupiter, military experiments, drug-running operations, mirages, lights from squid boats, insect swarms, flocks of birds, and "unburned meteorites."

Embarrassed at having released the film without having it subjected to a scientific investigation, Channel O brought optical physicist Bruce Maccabee, an American ufologist with considerable experience in photoanalysis, to New Zealand and Australia. Over the next 10 days Maccabee interviewed witnesses, experts, and radar personnel, conducted on-site inquiries, and tested the proposed solutions. From this and an extended technical analysis of the images, with the assistance of other scientific specialists, Maccabee would reject the alternative explanations as improbable or impossible.

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## NORTH DAKOTA CE3

A bizarre incident said to have taken place on the Great Plains in late November 1961 would never have come to light but for the fact that Donald E. Flickinger, an agent for the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Division of the U.S. Treasury Department, was working in Minot, North Dakota, a few years later and learned of it through local rumors.

In January 1968 Flickinger, who had a private interest in UFOs and headed the North Dakota subcommittee of the **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP), was able to speak with S and two other participants. The fourth no longer lived in the area. S worked in a supervisory capacity at the Minot Air Force Base hospital. The others were a small-town high-school superintendent, an active-duty Air Force sergeant, and a college professor—all "extremely reliable and responsible," in Flickinger's estimation.

As the story went, S and his friends had been hunting on a Sunday in the Harvey, North Dakota, area, southeast of Minot. By the time they started home, it was cold, dark, and rainy. Two of the party, including S, were dozing in the back seat when the two men in the front noticed a descending glowing object in the sky ahead of them. The object was lost to view near the ground half a mile away and to their right. Assuming that they were witnessing a plane crash, the men rushed to the scene, where they saw—at about 150 yards' distance—a "silo-appearing type craft which was sticking in the ground with this glow around it," in S's words. S himself learned of this part of the incident only later; he remained asleep for a few more minutes.

The men in the car plugged a hand spotlight into the cigarette lighter and shined it on the object. The light revealed four human-looking individuals standing around it. Suddenly, S said, "it was just like there was an explosion, sort of, and everything went out." The "explosion" led the onlookers to believe the presumed airplane had blown up, burning the crew or passengers they had just seen. S was roused from his sleep when he discovered that the small car in which they were traveling had left the road and was trying to navigate a soggy field in search of the no-longer-visible aircraft.

Soon they returned to the road and headed back to the spot from which they had seen the aircraft initially. On the way they spotted the craft. Using the spotlight again, they observed one of the figures. They could make out few details beyond the figure's apparel (something that "looked like white coveralls") and its height, just over five feet. The witnesses were startled when the figure, who was standing near a fence, waved them away.

Why would the victim of an airplane crash decline help? The men discussed what they should do next, and presently two of them decided they would get closer, the figure's negative gesture notwithstanding. One of the group then picked up a rifle. S thought this was a bad idea; what if the "silo" *was* a silo and they ended up shooting a farmer?

Eventually the men agreed to go back to a tiny town (believed to be Martin, North Dakota) 11 miles away where they had seen a police officer in a car. He was still there when they arrived. After satisfying himself that they were not drunk, he accompanied them to the site. There was nothing to see—at first. As the five men stood outside their cars talking about the situation, they noticed what looked like taillights from a vehicle moving in the field where they had first seen the object and its accompanying figures. Both cars raced in pursuit, and as the police car, which was in the lead, pulled right behind the lights, they went out, leaving nothing behind. There were no tracks in the muddy ground.

Puzzled but unable to do anything more, the police officer left, and the four hunters resumed their homeward trek. Two miles down the highway the glowing silolike aircraft reappeared, landing gently less than 150 yards away. A few moments later the men saw two of the figures watching them. They quickly plugged in the spotlight. S told Flickinger what happened then:

Two individuals got out of the car at this point. . . . [O]ne of these individuals from the car . . . went to the left and one went to the right. The one to the right was carrying this .22 Hornet rifle with the scope. . . . I don't know . . . what we were thinking of, but the two men in the car were holding the light on the two forms from the vehicle. They were . . . about 10 yards apart; one was a little forward of the other one. . . . They were just standing watching, so by this time the fellow on the right knoll dropped down on his knees, then down to a prone position with the rifle. This person looked in the scope and went from the knees on up. . . . Anyway, at this point there was a shot fired. It hit . . . one of the forms, high in the right shoulder. When the individual was struck he spun around, down to his knees, and then he got up with the other guy's assistance, and he looked over and said, or hollered, "Now what the hell did you do that for?"

Even more than six years later S (who was in fact the shooter) would remark, "To this very day I still maintain that it could have been USAF or somebody from this country, because they *were* human beings," albeit "shorter than average." It is by no means clear why gunfire entered the equation at all. ("The shot," S said,



"definitely hit something. . . . [There was] a thud sound, just like shooting any animal.") Though the encounter was undeniably unsettling, nothing in the figures' behavior could have been interpreted as threatening.

S had "no recollection" of what happened to the craft and the figures. All he recalled was a heated discussion inside the car, followed by a hasty departure and a curiously belated arrival:

[Judging by] the time that we started this trip, we figured it was earlier, and by the time we got home, it was just daylight. The wives were all sitting and waiting for us. We all knew it took too long for us to come back. We hadn't spent that much time chasing this thing around, and all of us knew or had the feeling that there was something missing there, and to this day we don't know what it was.

A few hours later, around noon, S was at work when his supervisor notified him that he was to go downstairs to meet some callers. They proved to be three well-groomed, official-looking men. Though they introduced themselves only by name, their manner led S to assume they were Air Force intelligence officers, their civilian dress notwithstanding. They told him they had a "report" about the event of the previous night. According to S:

[T]hey wanted to know the type of clothing I was wearing. They asked a few questions about this object we had seen, and most of their questions were just like they knew what we had seen and wanted to find out how much we had seen. . . . I just took it for granted that they had this report from this law officer down there, and they were just checking this thing out to see if we'd seen it. Of course I was still pretty shaky over the events that had happened the night before, especially the last part of it, but the law officer didn't know anything about this part of it. He'd already gone back to town by that time. So I figured this is USAF, and being as we had given this officer our names, I figured they knew just who the people were that shot the Air Force people. So they asked me the type of gear I was wearing. I told them hunting clothes. They asked me if I'd gotten out of the car in the field where the first sighting was made, and they're strictly talking about the first sighting, and I told them yes. . . . [T]hey never asked anything about the shooting. . . . I think they probably knew more than they said, but I don't know.

Not long afterwards the strangers drove S to his house in a car S remembered as a 1961 Plymouth. There

they . . . look[ed] at my hunting gear and my boots. They never did say why they wanted to see these things. The only thing they asked was if I got out of the car into the muddy field, and I said yes, and that's when I showed them the type of boots that I had on. They asked me if I had any other type of boots. I said yeah, I had a pair of wader type boot. Of course I told them that I hadn't been wearing them, but they

still wanted to see these too, so I produced the boots. They thought on it a little more and said, "Okay, that's enough for now". . . . [T]he one guy, in fact the only one who did all the questioning, said, "We want to thank you," and he called me by my name, "for your cooperation." He said, "We want you to keep this quiet," that "you'd better not say anything about this to anyone from now on." I assured him I wouldn't. So they got in their car. I then got pretty upset as they'd left me at home with no way back to work.

We know of this incident largely from S's testimony, inasmuch as only he permitted himself to be taped. Flickinger, an experienced lawman, felt that S's sincerity was not open to question, and several years later New Jersey psychiatrist/ufologist Berthold E. Schwarz, who interviewed S, found him still distraught over the incident.

In a letter to **J. Allen Hynek**, Flickinger reported on the subsequent fate of the Air Force sergeant:

[W] was honorably discharged from the USAF a short while after this incident, after serving his 4 year hitch. He re-entered the AF again in 1964 after having some trouble finding jobs on the outside. He told me that he was placed back in his old job classification, photo-reconnaissance, and that before leaving the Air Force, he had a Top-Secret Clearance. His commander told him upon his return to photo-recon in 1964 that his clearance would be reinstated but to the astonishment of [W], his commander and fellow workers not only did he not receive the expected top secret clearance but did not receive any clearance whatsoever. He has inquired on numerous occasions as to why, but the AF has not seen fit to answer him as of yet. He did put one Congressman to work on it and the Congressman came back with the answer from the Air Force that this man was unstable and unreliable and not the type to hold down high-level clearances. I asked [W] what reason they based this opinion on and he stated that they never gave him or the Congressman any answers as to this. I talked with [W] at length and the last thing he seems to me is unreliable or unstable. Quite the opposite in my opinion.

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## O'BRIEN COMMITTEE.

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→ See Project Blue Book and University of Colorado UFO Project.



## OCALA RADAR/ VISUAL CASE

**P**inecastle Electronic Warfare Range Tracking Station, a restricted facility operated by the U.S. Navy 32 miles east-southeast of Ocala, Florida, was the site of a puzzling, still-unexplained UFO incident late on the evening of Sunday, May 14, 1978.

The incident began with a phone call from a civilian. At about 10:05 p.m. she called from nearby Silver Glen Springs to ask if the installation was shooting off flares. The duty officer, SK-1 Robert J. Clark, assured her no such operation was going on at that moment. A second call came a few minutes later. A man, later identified as Rocky Morgan, said that he and seven other persons traveling on Highway 19 near Silver Glen Springs had just seen an oblong-shaped flying object, some 50 to 60 feet in diameter and "almost the color of the moon," pass over the top of his car. It had a flashing light that was intensely bright at its center.



Clark checked with the Jacksonville Air Route Traffic Control Center, which told him no aircraft were in the area. He and the base air controller, Gary Collison, climbed up an observation tower next to a van containing the base's radar equipment. Clark contacted external security and directed it to contact TD-2 Timothy Collins, a radar technician. Collins rushed to the tower. The personnel already there were watching a cluster of glowing lights off to the west-northwest. They were at eye-level and seemed to be just above an old Civil Defense tower three miles away. Even though it was a clear, quiet night, the witnesses heard no noise emanating from the lights, which apparently were attached to a single object.

After watching them through binoculars, Collins went down to warm up the track radar, which took five minutes, and the acquisition radar, which took 20 minutes. As he waited, he looked for the object with a periscope on the van and saw it again. At around 11:20 radar locked on to the target. The object was located at 0.2 degrees elevation; in other words, it was 50 to 100 feet above the ground—"treetop level," Collins would say. Its image on radar was "as strong [as] or stronger than" the image of the tower. The object seemed to be the size of a jetliner.

Ten to 15 minutes later it abruptly vanished from both sight and radar. But at around 11:40 the same or a similar object appeared 15 degrees to the north. Collins located it visually, but the second, computer-assisted radar did not track it for some reason. He also saw it through the periscope. A few minutes later it disappeared suddenly from both instrumented and visual observation.

Around midnight it or another object was seen three miles to the northwest. For five seconds it moved at more than 500 knots on a course, then accelerated for two seconds, and executed a hairpin turn in one second. When it made that turn, it was 15 miles south of the base—which meant it had covered 15 miles in seven seconds; most of that distance was covered in the last two seconds. The turn was a radical reversal of direction; now the UFO was shooting northward and toward the observers at the base. Its speed had slowed almost instantaneously to a mere *two knots*. It was at this point that Collins's radar locked on to it. After a little more than a minute, the object vanished. The sighting was over.

A dozen or so personnel had seen the object or objects. One of them, TD-AA Carol Snyder, told a newspaper reporter, "We saw three very blurry lights—red, white, and green. We watched them for about 30 minutes. We couldn't see how fast they were traveling. We were holding the binoculars, and the lights appeared to be bouncing."

The Navy conducted an investigation out of the Jacksonville center but came to no conclusions. Allan Hendry of the Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) interviewed several of the witnesses and gathered radar, meteorological, and astronomical data. He considered, then rejected, various prosaic alternatives before declaring this a case of "high merit" in the CUFOS publication *International UFO Reporter*. Later, in *Second Look* magazine, Hendry defended his investigation and interpreta-

tion against two debunkers, Robert Sheaffer and Philip J. Klass, who claimed—Collins's testimony notwithstanding—that the radar tracked only an "ambiguous" target. Sheaffer argued that the witnesses had first seen Venus, then Jupiter, and finally Capella. Hendry responded:

Once Jupiter set, Sheaffer has Capella take over as the new "second UFO," even though it is positioned twice as far to the north as the witnesses estimated. He started with Venus at magnitude -3.4, demoted to Jupiter at -1.5, and now shifted to Capella at magnitude +0.2 (all dimmed by the atmosphere near the horizon). These UFO candidates are fading fast! . . .

So Sheaffer and Klass are wrong. There *was* an unambiguous radar confirmation of a visual sighting of a stationary light source only three miles away and only 0.09 degrees above the tower, a position that *could not* be achieved by Venus and Jupiter . . . since neither planet can come closer to the tower than eight or nine degrees and still be "directly over" it (since they were descending in the west at a 61-degree angle to the ground).

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## OCCULT THEORIES ABOUT UFOS.

→ See *Men in Black* and *Paranormal* and *Occult Theories about UFOs*.

## OPERATION LURE.

→ See Keyhoe, Donald Edward (1897-1988).



In *UFO Reality* (1983) Jenny Randles refers to the “sensation of being isolated, or transported from the real world into a different environmental framework,” and suggests this feeling, occasionally reported by UFO witnesses, “is one of great importance to our understanding of UFOs. It is almost suggestive of the witness['] being transported temporarily from our world into another, where reality is but slightly different. . . . I call it ‘the Oz Factor’, after the fairytale land of Oz.”

One Oz Factor experience took place on July 21, 1978, at 10:15 on a warm summer’s evening in Davyhulme, Manchester, England, to a couple Randles calls Mr. and Mrs. W. The two observed a dark disc hovering in the twilight sky. It was surrounded by an aura, from which 30 to 40 beautiful purple rays shot out at various angles like spokes from a wheel, extending to about 12 times the diameter of the central disc. After one and a half minutes, Randles writes, “the ‘rays’ collapsed inwards in sequence, and the object slowly extinguished itself. It was massive, compared with the size of the rooftop opposite.”

During the sighting the Ws noted with puzzlement that the normally busy street was strangely quiet and devoid of vehicular or pedestrian traffic. Mrs. W later said that she felt “singled out” and “alone” as she and her husband watched the object.

Another such incident was reported by Jean Findlay of Poole, Dorset. At 9:01 on the morning of December 6, 1980, as she was waiting for a bus, she felt an urge to “look up . . . almost as if a voice in my head told me to do so.” A domed, disc-shaped UFO was hovering above nearby trees. Feeling “spellbound” and experiencing a sensation of “peace, calm, and warmth,” she watched the object emit a beam of light, rotate once, and fly away at a great rate of speed. When she looked at her watch, she found “time had flown by”—four minutes when it seemed as if the sighting had lasted only a few moments. Though the sighting had occurred at rush hour in a busy city, she said everything became “quiet” during the sighting, and she saw no one else around.

A possible Oz Factor episode figures in a sighting reported in Novato, California, on April 15, 1989. At 5:30 that afternoon a father and son saw, from their front lawn and at about 75 degrees on the horizon, a slowly descending object shaped like “two spheres connected together by a stem”—a dumbbell, in other words. The two spheres were golden with a white halo around them.

According to psychologist-UFO investigator Richard F. Haines, who interviewed the witnesses five weeks later, “the apparent angular size of the dumbbell was just less than the apparent width of [the father’s] thumbnail (at arm’s length) or about 1.5 degrees.” By naked eye and through binoculars, four smaller objects, golden discs, maneuvered near the original object. Haines wrote that the father “also noted the strange absence of kids and dogs at the time they watched the

object. There are usually many present at this time of day." The witness remarked, "It was strange—there was no one else who saw it." No report of the objects appeared in the newspapers.

A spectacular Oz Factor episode, with physical effects (technically a **close encounter of the second kind**), reportedly occurred half a mile south of Proberta, California, at around 5:45 one morning in December 1959. Larry Jensen was driving to work on U.S. Highway 99 when his radio began making "snapping" noises and his lights dimmed. He pulled over to the side of the road and got out to check his headlights, which he was distressed to find were now shining feebly.

Out of the corner of his eye, he spotted a huge, bright, bluish green crescent-shaped object hovering about 60 feet above the road a quarter-mile behind him. It appeared to be 80 to 90 feet across and 15 to 20 feet thick. Suddenly and inexplicably, he found that his clothes were soaked. Also, he told investigators, "I felt like I was being sucked up in space toward the object, as by a magnet."

He lunged for the car door, hoping to grab the rifle he always took with him, but instead he collided with the side mirror and staggered backwards. On a second try he managed to get inside. When he glanced at the rearview mirror, he could not see the object. Looking out the right-door window, however, he saw the UFO a few miles away, heading northeast and climbing at a shallow angle. Moments later it vanished from sight.

Jensen's car lights came back on. He resumed his journey, only to stop again 200 yards later when he smelled burning rubber. On lifting up the hood, he saw that his battery caps had blown out. The battery itself was "bulged out of shape," the generator was not working, and the armature and field wires had melted together.

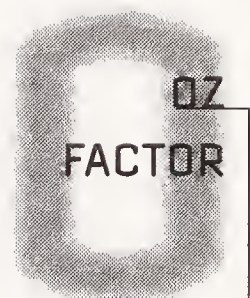
According to an investigative report, there was another bizarre element to the experience:

Something else that stood out in his mind was that he did not encounter a single car on this highway from shortly before this episode until he was about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile north of Proberta. He believes this is the only time in his life this has happened. U.S. 99 W is the main highway from San Francisco to Portland and Seattle. It carries heavy traffic.

In Randles's view, "The existence of the Oz factor certainly points towards the consciousness of the witness as the focal point of the UFO encounter. . . . [S]ubjective data that over-ride objective reality . . . could be internal (from a deeper level of ourselves) or external (for example, from some other intelligence). It may even be both."

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# P

## PARANORMAL AND OCCULT THEORIES ABOUT UFOS

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The association of the occult with themes that would figure prominently in flying-saucer lore predates 1947 and the UFO age by nearly two centuries. In 1758 the Swedish scientist and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) published a book, *Earths in the Solar World*, which reported in detail his observations of other planets and their inhabitants. He claimed to have traveled to these places in his astral body.

During the Spiritualist craze of the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, mediums occasionally claimed psychic interactions with extraterrestrials, sometimes in the course of out-of-body trips to neighboring planets. The teachings of these putative space people were of an occult religious nature and were influenced by Swedenborgian doctrine. The famous nineteenth-century occult teacher, writer, and medium Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891), founder of Theosophy, proposed a complex cosmic spiritual order that included such "ascended masters" as the Lords of the Flame, who lived on Venus. Later Guy Ballard, who popularized Theosophy for an American audience, reported his own contacts with the Lords of the Flame. Ballard founded the Great I AM sect, perhaps the first religious group to make contact with extraterrestrials a central tenet.



Ballard died in 1939, but angelic Venusians (along with similar beings from other planets both solar and extrasolar) would become a staple of the contactee movement, which began in 1952 with the emergence of such figures as George Adamski and George Van Tassel. Practically the only new wrinkle they brought to the Swedenborg/Blavatsky/Ballard tradition was the flying saucer itself. In the books they and the many other contactees to appear in their wake would write, "Space Brothers" discourse on metaphysical doctrines whose earthly provenance is clearly apparent to sophisticated observers.

The UFO-age contactee subculture had its roots in southern California, and most of its principal figures had been dedicated occultists long before they met the extraterrestrials who not coincidentally shared their beliefs. Within that subculture N. Meade Layne was considered an intellectual. Though nearly forgotten today, his ideas shape the thinking even of ufologists who have never heard of him.

In February 1945 Layne, a San Diego resident, created Borderland Sciences Research Associates (BSRA). He sought to conduct what he deemed a scientific investigation of the etheric world—the source, he believed, of all manner of otherwise inexplicable phenomena. As he put it, "Just as there is a spectrum of sound and color (ending in sounds we cannot hear and colors we cannot see), so there is also a spectrum of tangibility, ending in forms of matters which are too dense to be touched." Aiding Layne in his quest was Mark Probert, a trance medium who channeled teachings from, among others, a 500,000-year-old Tibetan named the Yada Di' Shi'ite.

When flying saucers came along in the summer of 1947, Layne and Probert identified them as "ether ships" piloted by "etherians." The etheric world coexists with and interpenetrates ours. Like our world, it has stars, planets, and other familiar features that are the etheric analogues of ours. Its inhabitants are human, highly advanced, and benevolent. The etherians must lower their "vibrational" rate considerably in order to enter our realm. In Layne's view the Venusians whom contactees were meeting came not from the planet known to us but from its etheric counterpart.

Layne disciple Trevor James Constable held a dark view of the etherians, who he warned "are of the anti-Christ." Entities who claim to be "physical beings from other planets" are "likely to be servants of darkness." Constable, who for a time had received psychic communications from self-proclaimed extraterrestrials, had shut them off when he realized that many were coming from malevolent beings posing as "Angels of Light." It is dangerous, he said, to deal with such entities because they lead their human victims into destruction.

If Layne's explicitly occult language, plus his ties to the contactee culture, rendered him suspect to all but the most radical UFO proponents, some more conservative ufologists nonetheless considered it possible that if UFOs did not come from outer space, perhaps they were visiting from the "fourth dimension"—the

etheric realm by another name. They picked up the idea not from occult literature but from science fiction, of which many early ufologists were fans (to the extent that some early saucer periodicals carried amateurish SF yarns along with UFO reports).

Even if ufologists initially had no interest in, or knowledge of, other sorts of “true mysteries,” they were exposed to them in the pages of *Fate*, a digest-sized magazine founded in 1948 by Curtis Fuller and Ray Palmer in response to the new popular interest in enigmatic aerial phenomena. Its first issue devoted much of its content to flying saucers, but it also carried articles on ghosts, automatic writing, and archaeological mysteries. In future issues of the magazine, UFOs would assume less prominence; they would be just one of a variety of mysteries *Fate*, essentially oriented toward psychic phenomena, would cover. As the only national magazine to treat UFOs regularly and sympathetically, it was read by nearly all UFO buffs.

New approaches to old questions. In 1959 Thomas M. Comella, heretofore a naive young supporter of the contactee movement, refashioned himself “Peter Kor” and launched a long series of revisionist theoretical essays in Ray Palmer’s *Flying Saucers* magazine. In one, published in 1962, he proposed an idea other writers would soon make widely popular:

So I posit a reality so strange, that encounters with it result in the varied frameworks found in the saucer saga, even though the general content of those frameworks is essentially the same. Further, that such encounters are not only the genesis points of the saucer saga, but of untold other mysteries throughout the ages. What is more, to accommodate the divergent frameworks found, not only in the saucer saga, but in these other mysteries, that reality must be so strange that it cannot be confined to our three dimensional world. If it were so confined, experiences of it would not vary so much as it would present itself solely as an external occurrence. The reality behind the saucer phenomena [sic] transcends our immediately perceptible world, thereby not availing itself to our scientific methods of proof which are geared to the physical world.

Another theorist of the period, an Austrian named Luis Schoenherr, wrote a number of papers for England’s *Flying Saucer Review* (usually called *FSR*). The series was titled “UFOs and the Fourth Dimension.” *FSR* would soon become an outspoken and vigorous champion of occult-flavored ufology, but in 1963—when the series began—the magazine was pro-extraterrestrial hypothesis (ETH) in the naivest sense, carrying articles that argued for intelligent life on the moon, Venus, and Mars, for example. This approach reflected the views of editor Waveney Girvan, a British publisher and a contactee enthusiast.

Other *FSR* contributors were starting to connect UFOs with supernatural events such as the 1917 Fátima, Portugal, miracle, with its Blessed Virgin Mary manifestation and “dancing sun.” Editor Charles Bowen wondered (echoing



Constable without mentioning him) if contactees could be describing real experiences but being deceived by a “facade deliberately created by alien entities whose objectives are in no way connected with our welfare.” Gordon Creighton, at the initiation of a long career as a theorist with many remarkable ideas, offered these comments:

[S]ome of the UFO beings allegedly encountered could . . . be said to correspond to our Western, Christian, idea of “Angels” . . . or to what Hindus and other peoples of Asia might term “Devas.” And . . . there is abundant evidence that there are other and altogether different creatures which correspond very closely indeed to the traditional concepts held, in all parts of our world, of “demons,” “goblins,” “trolls,” and so on.

The demonologists. Under Bowen’s editorship, with Creighton coeditor in all but name, *FSR* pushed a demonological interpretation of the UFO phenomenon. The magazine continued to publish numerous well-documented case studies and thoughtful analytical pieces, and not all—or even most—contributors or readers agreed with the new emphasis on sinister occult explanatory schemes. Still, *FSR*’s new direction was apparent even to the most casual reader. More and more its pages were filled with reports of the highest strangeness and commentary of sometimes marked eccentricity.

There could be no doubt that extreme experiential claims had become a significant element in UFO reporting. Even conservative UFO periodicals, no longer able to ignore them, now were treating seriously accounts of abductions, bizarre entities, and extended human-alien interactions. In the 1950s, when matters seemed more simple, it was usually fairly easy to separate the liars from the honestly puzzled; for one thing, the former tended to tell the wilder stories. Now, however, even patently sane and honest individuals were recounting experiences of a surreal character.

*FSR* decided that the high-strangeness episodes were far more important than any other, including those—multiple-witness sightings, radar/visual incidents, close encounters of the second kind—traditionally seen as central to the making of the case for UFOs as genuinely anomalous. As Bowen would remark years later, the magazine “attempted to start the shift from the study of the ‘machines’ to a study of the occupants in 1966. . . . The emphasis since then . . . has been on the occupant reports, with no punches pulled.” Because of the bizarre character of some of these reports, he, Creighton, and other writers dismissed the ETH as inadequate and naive.

Bowen expressed the conviction that good and evil entities “from universes parallel with ours but with a different time stream” are using the earth as a battlefield, all the while shrouding themselves in a veil of illusion in order to confuse us as to their true nature and intention. By now even Loch Ness’s fabled monsters had entered into the discussion. Malcolm Dickson, Kenneth C. Bayman, and F. W.

Holiday cited scriptural authority for the proposition that the monsters are demonic serpents linked in some way with flying saucers. Holiday, who had spent years investigating reports of the monsters, became convinced that Ness harbored dragons in the literal sense. Eventually, he enlisted the services of an eccentric Anglican clergyman who exorcised the loch on the evening of June 2, 1973. Soon afterwards Holiday, still at the loch, had frightening paranormal experiences, including an encounter with a stranger he took to be one of the men in black. He chronicled these matters in *FSR* articles and in a book, *The Dragon and the Disc* (1973).

To Creighton it was obvious that (his italics) "*Demons . . . are here already in immense strength.*" Cataclysmic events will befall the planet "before the close of this century," and soon human beings will "see *The Four Horsemen.*" Demonic entities are here to select those few people whose genetic stock is worth preserving. Meanwhile entire governments and nations are telepathically controlled puppets of these sinister forces, which also direct individuals to commit acts of "senseless, irrational violence. . . . For the great mass of mankind who are not—and by their very nature cannot be—awake, events must probably take their course."

It must be stressed that these peculiar beliefs—which represent a flight from reason by virtually any definition—were being expressed not in a fundamentalist Christian publication (where the equation of UFOs and the paranormal with demons has long been an article of faith) but in a magazine then seen as the world's leading journal of ufology.

Demons in spacesuits. Bowen and Creighton were not the only commentators who demonized ufology. Neither ever wrote a book, and neither contributed to any periodical but their own; thus their views directly reached only those who read *FSR*. John Keel, however, wrote not only for *FSR* but for a variety of UFO, psychic, and pulp magazines. He also produced a number of popular books. Beyond that he had one additional claim to attention: personal experience.

Unlike many theorists, Keel had put in considerable time as an investigator in the field. In the mid-1960s, having secured a lucrative book contract from a major publisher, he pursued reports of UFOs, monsters, men in black (MIB), poltergeists, and other anomalies. He also asserted that on more than one occasion he himself had seen—and sometimes interacted with—UFOs, MIB, and apparitions.

Like Creighton, Keel made no effort to conceal his demonological obsessions. He was, in fact, disarmingly frank on the subject:

The Devil's emissaries of yesteryear have been replaced by the mysterious "men in black." The quasi-angels of Biblical times have become magnificent spacemen. The demons, devils, and false angels were recognized as liars and plunderers by early man. These same impostors now appear as long-haired Venusians.



Keel also acknowledged his debt to Layne. Layne's "etheric world" and Keel's "superspectrum" are one and the same. Yet, though he did not take specific note of the fact, Keel departed from Layne in one important regard: as already noted, Layne considered the ethereans to be wise and benign on the whole; only astrals, who reside in a less advanced place on the vibrational spectrum, harbored ill intentions. But Keel's "ultraterrestrials" cynically manipulate us. They "can make us see whatever they want us to see and remember only what they want us to remember." As he put it in a particularly ripe paragraph:

We are like ants, trying to view reality with very limited perceptive equipment and then basing our theologies and philosophies on what are essentially misperceptions. The real problem is that there is a much larger reality around us that we cannot see but only sense. While we grovel on our way to the 21st Century, someone or some thing is watching with amusement. . . . We are biochemical robots helplessly controlled by forces that can scramble our brains, destroy our memories and use us in any way they see fit. They have been doing it to us forever.

In Keel's revisionist history ultraterrestrials "posing as gods and superkings" once ruled the earth, but when democracy became a force in human affairs, these "gods" and their descendants (royal families whose ancestors had mated with ultraterrestrials in human guise) lost their power and authority. Ever since then the ultraterrestrials have waged war on *Homo sapiens*. They have generated religions, cults, and secret societies, intervened in the lives of influential historical figures at crucial moments, and otherwise directed human life to serve their ends. God himself is an ultraterrestrial dwelling in the superspectrum.

Unfortunately, Keel was so focused on the hoaxes perpetrated, so he believed, by ultraterrestrials on humans that sometimes he seemed to forget that humans play hoaxes on humans. In his writings even the most blatantly bogus claimants were portrayed as sincere victims of scheming demons.

Bowen and Creighton, who at times appeared skeptical only of the existence of hoaxes, seemed to have trouble coming to grips with the reality of phony testimony and false evidence. Bowen, for example, proposed that Adamski and other contactees only *looked* like hoaxers; in fact, scheming aliens had set them up by planting preposterous and unbelievable messages in their heads. Worse, through their vast powers they induced their victims to take photographs of "objects like overgrown chicken feeders, monstrous lampshades or oversize[d] operating theater lamps," which afterwards the victims unwisely trumpeted as proof of their encounters with Space Brothers. The intended effect was to "make the [UFO] subject sound so silly to down-to-earth types that they shun it for ever!" Creighton believed Adamski to have been the victim of "brainwashing" by aliens.

The message from Magonia. Jacques Vallee, a French-American trained in astronomy and computer science (with a Ph.D. in the latter), was a graduate student under J. Allen Hynek at Northwestern University in the early 1960s. Interested in UFOs since

the 1950s, he exerted considerable influence on Hynek's later thinking about the phenomenon. Like Hynek, Vallee also had long been interested in the occult, though that would not be apparent immediately. His first two books, *Anatomy of a Phenomenon* (1965) and *Challenge to Science: The UFO Enigma* (1966, with Janine Vallee), argued the case for the ETH in an articulate and cautious manner.

Though the names Keel and Vallee would eventually be linked as if joined at the hip, Vallee was unenthusiastic at first about Keel's sudden prominence in FSR. In a letter published in the July/August 1968 issue, he complained about Keel's habit of making broad statements without proper supporting data. Earlier, in his personal journal, he expressed misgivings about Keel's "disturbing, prophetic style." Keel had just written him to predict that the next week (late July 1967) religious madness would engulf the world and a "prolonged [power] black-out" would occur "probably on the 26th or 27th." Vallee and his circle, including Hynek, privately considered Keel something of a crank.

By 1969, however, Vallee had signed on to an occult-based, anti-ETH ufology. In *Passport to Magonia*, his third UFO book, UFOs become just one more of the many guises a chameleonlike invisible order assumes in order to shape and direct human consciousness. Vallee calls this order "Magonia," Latin for magicland, after a medieval French peasant belief in a region by that name, "from whence come ships in the clouds," as an A.D. 840 manuscript by the Archbishop of Lyons puts it. Vallee surveys religious traditions, folk beliefs, occult texts, and nineteenth-century newspapers for evidence of other, pre-UFO manifestations of Magonia, and he finds it in Marian apparitions, fairylore, elementals, and the anomalous airships of 1896-97.

Unfortunately, Vallee's rather vague prose style, with its free use of words like "dreams" and "myths," gave a number of readers the impression that *Passport* was an exercise in impressionistic folklore, an exploration of mankind's traditional longing, at once foolish and noble, for belief in a supernatural realm occupied by wise gods and gentle elves.

Though the book had little impact on the larger public, its influence on ufology would be immense. Ufologists who shared Keel's disenchantment with the ETH but not his credulity and paranoia took it to heart. And in time it led to the emergence of a new school of ufology whose advocates went beyond Vallee to speculate that UFOs and other anomalous experiences are internally generated and shaped by cultural processes as opposed to nonhuman intelligences (see Psychosocial Hypothesis).

In Vallee's next book, *The Invisible College* (1975), "Magonia" was renamed the "control system," which ufologically sophisticated readers recognized as Layne's etheric realm and Keel's superspectrum with a fancy new title—and a new spin. The control system acts like a thermostat, Vallee writes, in which "UFOs may serve to stabilize the relationship between man's consciousness and the evolving complexities of the world which he must understand." Vallee never offers a clear



definition of the control system, but he suggests that it interacts with human beings via “meta-logic,” producing absurd and irrational phenomena that defy reason but that resonate on the unconscious level. The regular occurrence of waves constitutes a “schedule of reinforcement” that ensures that UFOs are never entirely out of the thoughts of human beings.

For these sweeping speculations Vallee offered little in the way of evidence. Nor would evidence confuse the case argued in *Messengers of Deception* (1979), where Vallee’s theories took a conspiratorial turn. In this book he contended that besides the supernatural realm and its manifestations, a shadowy human group—whose sponsors, members, and purposes are never defined—is employing “psychotronic” technology to create pseudomanifestations. These “messengers of deception” apparently “belong, or have access, to military, media, and government circles,” they have infiltrated the leading UFO groups, and they are seeking to effect social change of an unspecified sort. They may have some relationship or understanding with the supernatural order they are mimicking.

Two subsequent books, *Confrontations* (1990) and *Revelations* (1991), elaborate on these hypotheses without clarifying them.

The critics. Writing in his classic *Lo!* (1931), Charles Fort (1874-1932) drolly allowed as how “I have heard of ‘the fourth dimension’, but I am going to do myself some credit for not lugging in that particular way of showing that I don’t know what I’m talking about.” Fort died a decade and a half before anyone thought to call anomalous aerial phenomena “flying saucers” or formulate an occult ufology, but his remark suggests that he saw clearly the futility of trying to explain one unknown with another.

In 1968 a British writer, C. Maxwell Cade, recalled a Zen koan that goes like this: There is a goose in a narrow-necked bottle. How do you get it out without breaking the bottle or injuring the bird? The answer? “There, it’s out.” Cade went on:

In my opinion, whenever the Fourth Dimension is dragged into things—whether in relation to parapsychology, ufology, or whatever it may be, it is purely an attempt to cover up muddled thinking, bad observation or downright fraud by the use of a fine-sounding but empty phrase.

Reviewing *Passport to Magonia*, veteran ufologist Isabel L. Davis reacted incredulously to Vallee’s sanguine statement that “the modern, global belief in flying saucers and their occupants is identical to an earlier belief in the fairy-faith. The entities described as the pilots of the craft are indistinguishable from the elves, sylphs, and *lutins*.” She responded:

“Identical?” “Indistinguishable?” Certain resemblances do exist (almost any idea can find support somewhere in the wide fields of folklore, mythology, and religion), but the exact point-by-point similarity claimed by the author fades under scrutiny. Because he stresses the parallels and neglects the differences, his own data fail to confirm his

basic contention. The beings of the Secret Commonwealth are in no danger of being mistaken, except by Vallee, for UFO pilots.

"This is not a scientific book," the author announces in his preface. Nor is it a scholarly book. Besides errors of fact, insufficient documentation of sources, and the absence of an index to the text, it suffers from omission of important data, an elastic terminology, some remarkably cloudy writing, and over-interpretation.

Such criticisms, however, were exceedingly rare, possibly because hardly any ufologists were familiar with Vallee's sources (notably Walter Evans-Wentz, Thomas Keightley, and Edwin S. Hartland, authors of classic studies of Western European fairylore) or bothered to consult them to see if he had done them justice. (As readers can determine for themselves, Vallee's representation of their content comes out of highly selective reporting.) Moreover, not many readers understood exactly what Vallee was trying to say; even fewer grasped the book's underlying point that UFOs have more to do with magic than with science—and that, furthermore, Vallee did not mean this as a *skeptical* argument.

In the 1970s Vallee's influence on ufology and Forteanism was inescapable. To many anomalists it seemed as if Vallee (along with, many felt, Keel as well) had established beyond reasonable doubt that (1) UFOs cannot possibly be extraterrestrial spacecraft and that (2) they are simply one manifestation of many emanating from a single paranormal source. Those who did not agree chose to ignore Vallee and Keel (or disparage them in passing) rather than produce extended critiques. In any case, neither man took kindly to criticism; those who disagreed with them were called "buffs" and "cultists" (Keel) and "amateurs" and "hardened believers" suffering from "fantastic delusions" (Vallee).

Even Hynek had begun to sound a bit like Vallee. In time Hynek became more and more outspoken about his interest in paranormal approaches. He had rejected the ETH for a variety of reasons, but mostly because he believed the distances in space were too great for would-be travelers to bridge. In a 1978 lecture to the Mutual UFO Network conference, he speculated that perhaps a supercivilization somewhere in the universe might be able to incorporate

ESP, psychokinesis, teleportation, mental telepathy as part of their everyday technology as we incorporate transistors and computers in ours. . . . UFOs could well be the product of such a technology. To such a technology, the idea of building nuts and bolts spacecraft and blasting them off from some space Cape Canaveral would seem archaic and childlike. Perhaps all they have to do to get someplace is to think themselves there, projecting a thought form, or a force field[,] to any part of space they want and causing it to manifest there, on that plane.

But Hynek could not abide the conspiratorial ruminations of *Messengers of Deception*, which he regarded as paranoid and incoherent. He found especially ludi-



crous Vallee's suspicion that CUFOS, which Hynek founded and headed, was under the control of intelligence agents. Instead of stressing conspiracies, Hynek wrote, Vallee should be writing about "the many beings and intelligences that occultists and many Eastern religions take for granted."

J. Gordon Melton, a leading authority on fringe religious movements, accused Vallee of espousing a "variation of the illuminati theory so beloved of conspiracy enthusiasts." Contactee groups, far from serving sinister forces,

merely continue a type of visionary psychic religion. . . . As such they seem destined to remain on the fringes of society for the next 30 years, just as they have for the past 30. Vallee to the contrary, these groups show no signs of increasingly influencing the ufological community, much less society at large. They are the result, not the cause, of social change.

After a nine-year silence Vallee returned to ufology with *Dimensions* (1988), consisting largely of material culled from previous books. The appearance of *Confrontations* two years later brought forth the first significant critical scrutiny of Vallee in years.

As it happened, critic Jerome Clark had been an early advocate of the view that UFOs "may be no more than a psychosocial construct, the Space Age face of an elusive other-reality." In time, as his thinking evolved, he came to believe that UFO and other anomalous manifestations are internally, not externally, generated; the only intelligence involved is that of the individual who has the experience. Finally, unable to reconcile physical evidence and radar/visual sightings with hallucinations and visions, Clark called for a de-emphasis on high-strangeness cases and a cautious, scientifically based reexamination of the ETH.

In 1990, in an eight-page essay/review in *CUFOS International UFO Reporter (IUR)*, Clark blasted *Confrontations* for its "eccentric claims and shaky speculations" and its misrepresentation, or ignorance, of the best current UFO research. The following year he pointed to what he considered the illogic at the heart of *Revelations*:

According to Vallee, UFO beliefs are so spiritually charged that they are actually changing society, and that is why the conspirators use them to manipulate us to some end or other about which Vallee is characteristically obscure. In fact, UFOs were trivialized and marginalized long ago, and outside ufology, which Vallee apparently has mistaken for the real world, they are visible, and even there not consistently so, mostly in popular culture, along with rap music, soap operas, supermarket tabloids, miniskirts, and other ephemera. As a vehicle for social transformation UFOs are just about the last thing any sane conspirator would choose.

In Clark's view it was hard-evidence cases that make the UFO phenomenon worth paying attention to, not fantastic, unverifiable, and inconclusive anecdotal

dotes—even those related by apparently sane and sincere individuals. “Occult ufology,” he wrote, “would have the tail wag the dog,” in other words define its focus and argue its case from its weakest evidence.

The New Age perspective. Not all occult ufology is filtered through a dark lens. A brighter, more optimistic school sees UFOs and paranormal phenomena generally as vehicles of positive transformation and consciousness expansion. In a trilogy of books published between 1973 and 1976, Brad Steiger chronicled the experiences of contactees, channelers, and visionaries. Though a friend of Keel, Steiger drew entirely opposite conclusions about the intentions of otherworldly intelligences:

It is the focusing of this Higher Intelligence that creates the Divine Fire—a continually accessible line of communication with an ever-powerful energy source. The Divine Fire will eternally transmit universal truths so that man may draw power and inspiration from a source of strength outside himself as he evolves as a spiritual being and progresses out of his old, physical limitations into a higher realm that is his by right of his cosmic inheritance.

New Age psychologist Michael Grosso coined the word “psychoterrestrial” to characterize the psychic projections he held to be responsible for UFO and other manifestations. He ascribed to these projections nearly magical properties. “If UFOs are mythic constructs,” he wrote, “it is not surprising that their physical effects fit the UFO construct. To look like real spaceships, they obligingly affect radar.” Along with Marian apparitions, MIB, and other supernatural entities, they are “forces of rebirth” whose purpose is to trigger a radical transformation of consciousness that will save humanity from otherwise certain self-destruction. Their home is the “ultradimensional mind,” which Grosso defines as follows:

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Given the timeless, spaceless nature of ESP and PK [psychokinesis], perhaps some (or all) human minds form a system—a parallel universe of mind, a distinct entity with its own properties. . . . It would be a mind with properties distinct from its component minds, on the assumption that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The sum of human minds, united in a systematic whole, thus serves as a model for the ultradimensional mind. Perhaps this is the entity that holds the secret to the UFO mystery.

Grosso draws inspiration from the great Swiss psychologist-philosopher C. G. Jung (1875-1961), who had an interest in UFOs and even wrote a book on them. Like Grosso, Jung thought that the flying-saucer image represents an archetype of wholeness, a balancing of the intellectual and intuitive halves of the psyche, and the presence of such objects portends the kind of profound “psychic change” human beings may expect “when the spring-point enters Aquarius.” He even took up the issue of what he called “materialized psychisms”—psychoterrestrials to Grosso—but dismissed them as impossible. He specifically rejected the notion that “psychic projections [can] throw back a radar echo.” Though a hero and mentor to anti-ETH New



Age theorists, Jung himself thought UFOs themselves (as distinct from whatever myths, dreams, and fantasies they triggered in human imaginings) are probably spacecraft from other worlds involved in quiet exploration of the earth.

When the abduction phenomenon came to occupy a large role in ufology's concerns, it sparked a new round of occult speculation. Dennis Stillings introduced the term "cyberbiology," defining it as the

interaction of consciousness with other systems. . . . It is becoming more apparent that mind-directed self-regulatory effects—whether one refers to conscious or unconscious mind as the agent—are not "skin-bounded," but can be exteriorized into other systems. Neither do these effects have to arise from a single mind: they may be the product of a "group psyche."

Thus the entities reported by UFO abductees. Stillings wastes no time trying to demonstrate why it is "becoming more apparent" that any such things as "cyberbiological" manifestations really happen outside the imaginations of occultists. It is enough to say that they do, then dismiss with contempt all who doubt (Stillings matches Keel in vituperous disdain for dissenting ufologists; they are "sick," he says). To many adherents, occult ufology's truths are regarded as self-evident.

In *The Omega Project* (1992) Kenneth Ring, a University of Connecticut psychologist best known for his research into the near-death experience (NDE), argues that ostensible aliens, angels, and other otherworldly entities exist in an "imaginal realm," a "third kingdom" between reality and fantasy, accessible through (Ring's italics) "certain *altered states of consciousness* that have the effect of undermining ordinary perception and conceptual thinking." This realm is peopled by the creatures of our imagination; yet it is a place "that in some sense *truly exists* outside time and space."

This is Grosso's ultradimensional mind, of course, and it remains a speculative, unproven—perhaps even unprovable—concept. What makes Ring's approach interesting, however, is that it at least starts out from an empirical base. Rather than attempt to argue point-by-point parallels between NDEs and UFO abductions and infer a relationship therefrom, Ring turned his attention to the one aspect of the question whose reality no one could doubt: the experiencers themselves.

Through extensive psychological testing of sample groups (including a control sample of those who were interested in UFOs and the paranormal but claimed no experience of either), he and colleague Christopher J. Rosing found that abductees and near-death experiencers are emotionally indistinguishable. Though not fantasy-prone in the clinical sense, they sensed other realms and spirit beings even in their childhoods. These childhoods, more troubled than most people's, typically involve episodes of abuse, trauma, and serious illness. One consequence is a "development of a dissociative response style as a means of *psychological defense*." Ring

theorizes that this dissociated state facilitates not only escape from stress but also “*psychological absorption*” whose intense focus on the experiencer’s internal being effectively alters consciousness. The torment of their lives has given them one spectacular gift: “*an extended range of human perception beyond normally recognized limits.*” (All italics are Ring’s.) In this way they enter the imaginal realm, where they encounter marvelous sights and entities and undergo profound positive life changes. From all of this, many come to believe that the human race is evolving toward higher spiritual consciousness under the direction of benevolent superior intelligences.

Underneath both NDEs and abductions, in Ring’s view, is the archetype of shamanic journey. The NDE is that archetype in a purer form; the abduction represents it as filtered through the popular culture of flying-saucer lore and science fiction. Though Ring acknowledges that “there are neurological correlates of these experiences” (primarily in high temporal-lobe sensitivity), that does not mean that is *all* they are; these may be simply the method of transmission through which signals from the otherworld are detected. This otherworld is communicating in symbolic language and images. In abduction accounts the “small, gray, sickly looking” aliens have heads too big for their bodies. They look like starving children. The message: “The future of the human race—symbolized by the archetype of the child—is menaced as never before.” We are entering a “planetary near-death crisis,” Ring says, quoting a phrase from Grosso. He writes:

These persons, our extraordinary experiencers, are, I believe, the true visionaries of our time, the bearers of the emerging myth of the twenty-first century calling us to a cosmic-centered view of our place in creation, a myth that has the power to ignite the fires of a worldwide planetary regeneration and thus to save us from the icy blasts of Thanatos’s nuclear winter.

This is a mountain’s worth of optimistic guesswork piled on top of a mole hill’s worth of empirical data. It is also New Age evangelism of a sort that first emerged, at least in UFO lore, in the 1950s, when contactees promised salvation via the higher wisdom of the Space Brothers, who appear in more sophisticated guise in the works of Ring, Grosso, and Stillings. Moreover, many abductees consider their experiences the source of stress and trauma, not relief from them. Post-traumatic stress disorder is a frequent consequence.

But if one puts aside *The Omega Project’s* extravagant speculations, the book is a significant and welcome contribution to the discussion if for no other reason than it is, in part at least, an effort to address questions empirically. If we cannot directly study the experiences themselves, we can at least study the experiencers, and if further studies confirm Ring and Rosing’s findings that extraordinary encounters happen mostly to persons with common histories and personalities, we shall have learned something interesting indeed.



In the meantime, the problem with paranormal and occult theories about UFOs is best summed up in the words of folklorist and ufologist Thomas E. Bullard:

Claims about reality demand proof on the same terms that we treat other scientific claims. What do we find instead? The phenomenological theories of alternate realities handicap themselves with a well-nigh fatal combination of poor comparative methodology and unsound structural components, and no algebra of apologetics can transform these two minuses into a plus. Speculations about the psychoid properties of archetypes will not explain the physical effects of UFOs. If those physical effects are genuine, then prove to me first that archetypes exist and can have physical effects, or I will look for simpler and more direct solutions elsewhere. Using one unproven theory to support another is just a more sophisticated tautology, more verbose but ultimately no more informative about the physical world than identifying a bald man as hairless. In one sense this tack is even less informative: It clouds the basic questions with confusing masses of theory, distracting participants in the dialogue to talk only about theories and forget the real issues. The very proliferation of phenomenological theories with no way to sort out the right from the wrong simply underscores the danger that we may become more deeply mired in sophistry than the Athenian Academy.

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## PASCAGOULA ABDUCTION CASE

## PASCAGOULA ABDUCTION CASE

The second most famous UFO-abduction case in history (the first being the Hill Abduction Case) took place on Thursday, October 11, 1973, at the southeastern tip of Mississippi. It received enormous publicity, owing perhaps in good part to its having been reported at the onset of the great American UFO wave that erupted that month.

Around nine in the evening Charles Hickson, 42, and Calvin Parker, 19, were fishing from the dock of an abandoned shipyard along the Pascagoula River when a “zipping sound” alerted Hickson to the approach of a domed, football-shaped object. Thirty feet long, eight to 10 feet high, it had two windows and two blue lights. It descended until it was about two feet above a clearing some 30 to 40 yards behind them. A door opened on the nearer end, and a brilliant light glowed from the interior. Moments later three figures floated out of the opening, heading in their direction. Hickson would describe them as follows:

The head seemed to come directly to the shoulders, no neck, and something resembling a nose came out to a point about two inches long. On each side of the head, about where ears would be, was something similar to the nose. Directly under the nose was a slit resembling a mouth. The arms were something like human arms, but long in proportion to the body; the hands resembled a mitten, there was a thumb attached. [Hickson would later compare them to claws.] The legs remained together and the feet looked something like elephant’s feet. The entire body was wrinkled and had a greyish color. There could have been eyes, but the area above the nose was so wrinkled I couldn’t tell.

The beings were slightly over five feet tall. Two positioned themselves on either side of Hickson and grabbed his arms. Momentarily Hickson felt a stinging sensation on his left arm. Then he became paralyzed and numb. The third being held Parker, who had fainted.

The two men and the three entities entered the craft. Something like an “eye,” the size and shape of a football, floated from the wall to within six inches of Hickson’s face. Hickson lay suspended in the air in different positions (once at a 45-degree angle) as the eye moved around his body. At this point Hickson could no longer see the beings, who he thought might be behind him; because he was still paralyzed, he could not determine that for himself, nor could he get his mouth to function. The entities entered Hickson’s line of vision again. Two of them took him outside in the same configuration as before. The three glided to the pier, with Hickson’s feet dragging along the ground.



When they arrived at the spot from which they had abducted Hickson, they let him go. His legs gave way beneath him, and he fell. He looked up to see Parker, who was standing there motionless, with his arms outstretched, as if in deep shock. Hickson started to crawl toward him but then found that he was able to stand. He heard the zipping sound again, and he turned to see the blue flashing lights that had first caught his attention. Just as they disappeared, a voice spoke inside his head: "We are peaceful. We meant you no harm."

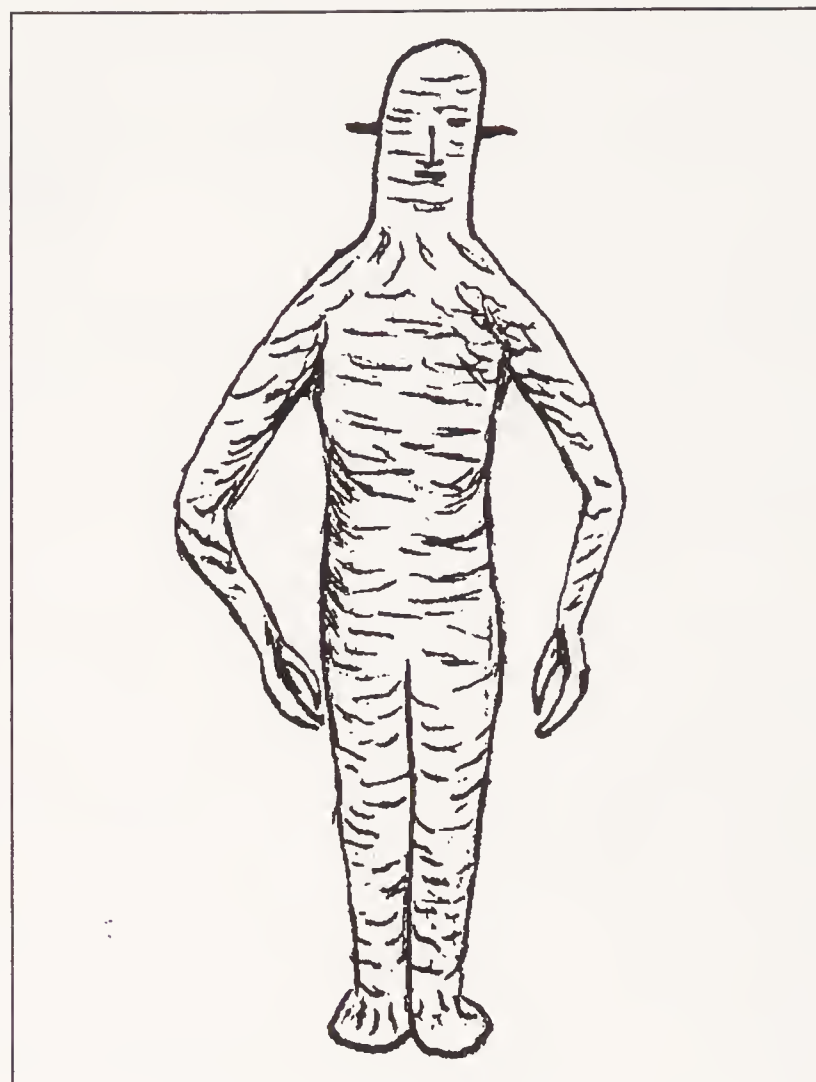
For his part Parker, who had lapsed in and out of consciousness, remembered being taken toward the ship, hearing a whistling noise and a click, then seeing the bright interior lights just before he was floated outside. He was left standing, though unable to move, and looking out on the river. He saw the UFO shoot upwards and vanish at about 50 feet.

The entire episode had lasted probably 20 minutes.

Independent confirmation? At 9 p.m., at the conclusion of a television show he had been watching, Larry Booth of Pascagoula got up to check the front door prior to retiring for the night. He noticed a "huge object" of some sort hovering five to eight feet above a nearby streetlight. As he recalled in an interview in August 1974:

This object was standin' still, it wasn't movin' at all when I seen it. But all the lights around the outside of it were turnin'—clockwise motion. And they were all red. . . . I would say it was larger than the props on a helicopter, you know how the big helicopters are with the large props? I would say that it was bigger around than that.

[T]he lights all the way around it, a lot of them, [were] close together . . . circling . . . slower than an ambulance light turns . . . about half that fast . . . I couldn't hear a sound. A helicopter would've jarred everybody in here out of the house.



Drawing of the alien being that allegedly abducted two fishermen in Pascagoula, Mississippi, in 1973. (Fortean Picture Library)

The object began to move slowly away in the darkness. Booth thought he detected a dome atop it. Booth could see that the object was round. At the time he thought he was viewing some kind of “experiment” run out of a local military base.

Investigation and hoopla. Hickson and Parker sat in a car for the next 45 minutes trying to calm their shattered nerves and to decide what to do next. Hickson drank whiskey out of a bottle. In due course Parker suggested that they contact the military. Hickson located a pay phone and called Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, 30 miles west of Pascagoula. A sergeant there told him that the Air Force did not handle UFO reports; he should tell his story to the police.

Instead they drove to the office of the *Mississippi Press Register*, just a few blocks away. Parker, who was driving, got out, explaining to his companion that there was a clock in the building and he wanted to know what time it was. But the building was locked. So Hickson and Parker called the Jackson County Sheriff’s Office, where the deputy who took the call urged them to come over and talk in person.

At 10:30 p.m. the two witnesses showed up. They brought with them two catfish, apparently to prove as much of the story as they could, which was that they had been fishing earlier in the evening. Hearing that one of the men had liquor on his breath, Sheriff Fred Diamond ordered his deputies to administer breath analysis. Two hours of intense grilling followed, but Hickson and Parker stuck to their stories, saying early on that they wanted to take lie-detector tests. They also insisted that they wanted no publicity. Parker, who was barely coherent, seemed particularly shaken.

At one point Hickson and Parker were left alone in a room where, though they did not know it, they were being taped. Sheriff Diamond assumed that if they were lying, that fact would become immediately apparent when the two spoke privately. Instead the men’s demeanor changed not at all. They continued to talk in the voices of the terribly distressed:

*Parker:* I got to get home and get to bed or get some nerve pills or see the doctor or something. I can’t stand it. I’m about to go half crazy.

*Hickson:* I tell you, when we [get] through, I’ll get you something to settle you down so you can get some damn sleep.

*P:* I can’t sleep yet like it is. I’m just damn near crazy. . . . I passed out. I expect I never passed out in my whole life.

*H:* I’ve never seen nothin’ like that before in my life. You can’t make people believe—

*P:* I don’t want to keep sittin’ here. I want to see a doctor.

*H:* They better wake up and start believin’. . . . they better start believin’.

*P:* You see how that damn door come right up?



*H:* I don't know how it opened, son. I don't know.

*P:* It just laid up and just like that those son' bitches—just like they came out.

*H:* I know. You can't believe it. You can't make people believe it.

*P:* I [was] paralyzed right then. I couldn't move.

*H:* They won't believe it. They [are] gonna believe it one of these days. Might be too late. I knew all along they was people from other worlds up there. I knew all along. I never thought it would happen to me. . . .

Soon Hickson left the room. All alone, Parker began to pray: "It's hard to believe. . . . Oh God, it's awful. . . . I know there's a God up there. . . ."

When Hickson and Parker went to work the next day (at the Walker Shipyard), they did not discuss their experience at first, but their co-workers could see that Parker was disturbed about something. Then the sheriff called. He wanted the two to come right over; his office was full of reporters. Surprised and annoyed, Hickson reminded him of his promise not to leak the story. The sheriff protested his innocence but noted that it probably would be impossible to keep a story like this quiet.

Hickson's foreman overheard the conversation and asked Hickson what had happened. In short order Hickson was repeating the story to the shipyard owner, Johnny Walker, who urged him to get an attorney. Walker notified a prominent local attorney, Joe Colingo, who was both the company lawyer and Walker's brother-in-law. Reportedly Walker told him the UFO story might be "worth only about a million dollars." Colingo arrived shortly and accompanied his new clients to the sheriff's office. Diamond said his office did not have the facilities for the polygraph test Colingo and the witnesses wanted. Meanwhile Hickson expressed concern that he and Parker possibly had been exposed to radiation; would it be possible to have them tested?

Coling and Detective Tom Huntley took the two to a local hospital, which said it lacked the equipment to conduct radiation tests. Huntley then spoke with Keesler, and the group headed off to the air base. There, under heavy guard, Hickson and Parker were led to a building where a team of doctors conducted an extensive examination. Afterwards the "whole base command" (in Huntley's words) sat in as the Keesler intelligence chief interrogated Hickson and Parker. The officer, Huntley remembered, acted "cool" as if "he'd heard it all before." Huntley noticed that when Hickson mentioned the beings' clawlike hands, two colonels exchanged glances.

Late that afternoon Colingo met Hickson, Parker, and Parker's father in his office and drew up a contract. By now the witnesses were feeling overwhelmed, and they were relieved that so important a man—as they saw Colingo—was interested in them. Subsequently, debunkers would intimate that Hickson and Parker had invented the UFO story to make money. No evidence of a hoax would ever emerge,

however. To all appearances the idea that the story could be exploited for financial gain was Colingo's alone, and Hickson and Parker would never see any significant amount of money from it. (Hickson later dismissed the attorney because, he said, "Colingo just wanted to make a buck.")

That day Hickson's left arm bled from what looked like a small puncture wound, at the precise spot where the beings had grabbed him.

By the next day Pascagoula was crawling with journalists. Two scientists had also flown in, separately. One was James A. Harder, a professor of engineering at the University of California at Berkeley. Harder was also a consultant to the Tucson-based Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (APRO). The other was J. Allen Hynek, Northwestern University astronomer and for 20 years (until 1969) the principal scientific consultant to the Air Force's Project Blue Book. Harder would try without success to hypnotize the two, who were too shaken and distracted for the procedure to work.

All who dealt with the two in the aftermath of their alleged encounter—whether they were police officers, investigators, friends, or acquaintances—shared the view that they were telling the truth as they saw it. The sincerity of the two seemed palpable. Those who could not believe in the existence of aliens sought alternative explanations (such as vivid hallucination) that acknowledged Hickson and Parker's genuine distress without forcing the theorists to adopt an unacceptably extraordinary interpretation.

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The excitement continued for weeks afterwards. Unable to come down from the experience, Parker returned to Jones County, Mississippi, his and Hickson's home 130 miles north of Pascagoula. There he suffered an emotional breakdown and was placed in Laurel's Community Hospital for a time. Meanwhile reporters and curiosity seekers kept bothering Hickson. On October 30 Hickson took a polygraph test administered by Scott Glasgow of the New Orleans-based Pendleton Detective Agency. "I am convinced that he believes he saw a spaceship and that he believes he was taken into the spaceship by three creatures," Glasgow told the press. In January 1974 Hickson appeared on Dick Cavett's late-night television show.

It took Parker years to recover from the incident. He moved from Pascagoula to Louisiana and stayed away from reporters and investigators. Hickson occasionally shows up at UFO conferences but otherwise maintains a low profile.

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## PILOT SIGHTINGS.

→ See Arnold Sighting; Chiles-Whitted Sighting; Coyne CE2; Foo Fighters; Fort Monmouth Radar/Visual Case; Green Fireballs and Other Southwestern Lights; Iran CE2; JAL Sighting; Kinross Case; Lakenheath-Bentwaters Radar/Visual Case; Mantell Incident; Muroc Air Base Sightings; Nash-Fortenberry Sighting; New Zealand Film; RB-47 Radar/Visual Case; Salt Lake City Sighting; Valentich Disappearance; and Washington National Radar/Visual Case.

## PORTAGE COUNTY SIGHTINGS

Portage County Deputy Sheriff Dale F. Spaur reported for duty at the sheriff's office in Ravenna, Ohio, at midnight, prepared to work the early-morning hours of Sunday, April 17, 1966. An hour or two later he hooked up with Wilbur "Barney" Neff, a mounted (auxiliary) deputy who ordinarily worked as an airport mechanic. Their routine police duties brought them to the southern part of the county (located in northeastern Ohio, just to the east of Cleveland and Akron) and to a road near Atwater Center where a motorist had collided with a utility pole. They sent the man to a hospital, arranged for the car to be towed, and called in a repairman to fix the pole. Because the morning was chilly, they drove east to Deerfield to buy coffee for themselves and the repairman. They arrived back at the accident scene around 4:45 a.m.

As they chatted with the repairman, they overheard radio traffic between Portage and Summit counties. Radio operators and deputies were chuckling about an Akron woman's report of a bright object "as big as a house" over her neighborhood. The three listeners joined in the laughter.

Shortly thereafter Spaur and Neff headed west on Route 224, intending to file an accident report at a nearby hospital. At a spot three or four miles east of Randolph, they passed a rusty 1959 Ford parked on the highway's left shoulder. They turned around and parked behind it. Both got out, and Spaur approached the vehicle while Neff stood by the front of the patrol car. It was just after 5 a.m.

Spaur happened to glance over his right shoulder and observe a moving light visible through trees at the top of a small hill. The light was coming in from the west, heading in their direction. The deputy was surprised to find himself thinking, "That must be the UFO that's been talked about." He pointed it out to Neff.

Within moments it came near the trees, then ascended, turned sharply to the right, passed over the road, and hovered 50 to 100 feet in the air. A perfect oval in shape, it was a brilliant blue-white "almost as bright as a flashbulb." Looking at it caused Spaur's eyes to water. It lit up the ground around the cruiser as if it were "high noon." Whenever it moved, it tipped forward in the direction it was going.

Suddenly, without saying a word to one another, the two broke for the cruiser at the same moment. Once inside, Spaur radioed the sheriff's office and spoke with a sergeant, who ordered him to wait there until a car with a camera got to the site.

As they watched, they heard "a whisper behind a humming noise, which seemed to come from the object," Spaur would recall later that day. "This thing went straight up to about 250 or 400 feet and came back to the south side of the highway, directly overhead." When the UFO rose, the sound got louder and the light got brighter. It drifted 150 feet ahead, then hovered motionlessly above the center of the road.

Spaur drove cautiously toward it. He and Neff now had a better view of the object. It was 18 to 24 feet thick, 35 to 45 feet in diameter, with a rounded bottom and a top barely visible in dim silhouette. The UFO started to draw away from them, ascending to 500 feet and speeding up whenever Spaur accelerated. Soon the cruiser was doing 80 mph. Over the radio Deputy Robert D. Wilson urged Spaur to shoot at it. Spaur refused.

On arriving at the intersection of 224 and 183, Spaur turned sharply to the right (south) on the latter. The two highways run parallel to the north-south for about a mile. The UFO positioned itself over a field just off 224, and Spaur quickly got back on the original route, in time to watch the object head southward, cross 224, and turn east 100 yards later, illuminating the ground all the while. Spaur remarked over the radio that the light was so bright on the road that he hardly needed his headlights.

Passing over a construction site near Atwater Center, it lit up heavy equipment. The UFO kept a constant distance between itself and P-13 (the cruiser's official designation) until the two approached Berlin Reservoir in neighboring Mahoning County. Here the UFO ascended to 1000 feet and crossed the highway to the north. From his left window Spaur watched it at this position for a few minutes. Then, just before P-13 got to Canfield, it crossed the road heading south, keeping its 1000-foot elevation. P-13 was now barreling along 224—fortunately nearly deserted at this time of morning—at 100 mph.



By now the ongoing drama was being broadcast over police radios in three counties. In the excitement the dispatchers at Ravenna misunderstood Spaur's direction, and the camera car got lost, thereby destroying the opportunity for photographic evidence. Nonetheless, before events had run their course, there would be plenty of other kinds of evidence.

At Canfield the UFO kept moving farther and farther to the southeast. Then it cut sharply east and passed in front of them, then resumed its southeasterly route. Spaur turned right onto Route 14/46, which put him on a southbound route and generally on the object's path. The UFO was to their left, apparently receding in the distance, until it swung around and flew over the road south of them.

The sun was rising, and with it the object's structure came more clearly into view. Its domelike top surface had a "satiny" metallic appearance, with an antenna- or finlike device, possibly as much as 18 feet long and a foot wide at its base, jutting upward at an angle from the rear-center. Spaur and Neff reported over the radio that the UFO clearly was a conscious participant in the chase. On several occasions they had had to slow down for traffic lights or other obstacles, and each time the UFO had slowed down as if to wait for them. This aspect left them with an uneasy feeling. They also were concerned that so far no one else had reported seeing the object. They knew that without such confirmation they would be easy prey to ridicule.

That confirmation was imminent. Among those monitoring P-13's radio messages was Patrolman H. Wayne Huston of the East Palestine, Ohio, police department. Route 14 passes just to the north of East Palestine, a small Columbiana County town near the Ohio-Pennsylvania border. Realizing that P-13 was heading his way, Huston spoke with Spaur and said he would join him when he arrived in the vicinity of East Palestine. As Huston testified in a statement eight days later:

I saw the thing when Dale was about five miles away from me. "OV-1 [Huston's cruiser number], can't you see it?" he said, and I did. It was running down Rt. 14, about 800-900 feet up when it came by. That was the lowest I ever saw it.

As it flew by, I was standing by my cruiser. I watched it go right overhead. It was shaped something like an icecream cone, with a sort of partly melted down top. I don't know whether the bottom was solid or not; it might have been like a searchlight beam, coming to a point; but it was so bright I would say it was brighter than the sun when it came up. The point part of the cone was underneath; the top was sort of like a dome.

Spaur and Neff came down the road right after it. I fell in behind them. We were going 80-85 miles an hour, a couple of times to around 105 miles an hour. At one point at least, I was almost on Spaur's bumper,

and we checked with each other what we saw. It was right straight ahead of us, a half to three fourths of a mile ahead.

I am familiar enough with Rochester [Pennsylvania] and I guided him by radio, because I couldn't pass him in Bridgewater, to lead him. At Brady's Run Park [a few miles from Beaver], a car started to come out, hit the traffic light treadle, and some trucks were there; we had to slow down, and lost sight of it. We came on down Rt. 51; just after we came out of the railroad underpass in Bridgewater, coming out of Fallston, we spotted it again over by Rochester, and then in front of them again when we turned to Rochester.

Huston clarified the "cone" description in an interview with William B. Weitzel, a Pittsburgh field investigator for the Washington-based National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP). "I don't think that was a solid substance," he said. "It . . . looked more to me like light rays, or some kind of light like you'd flash a flashlight in fog or smoke or something, coming down from the bottom of it."

Spaur and Neff were now far from their legal jurisdiction, two counties and a state away. Just past Fallston, in Bridgewater, the UFO descended a few hundred feet as if waiting for them to emerge from the underpass. When Spaur saw it, it was directly ahead. Its apparent size, Spaur noted, exceeded his rearview mirror. The object rose again to 1000 feet, then flew horizontally in front of them. As it was ascending, Huston saw a "projection" on the top—evidently the "antenna." At this stage the two cars were approaching Conway, Route 51 had become 65, and P-13 was about to run out of gas. Spaur was also getting instructions from Portage County, relayed through authorities in Columbiana County, to abandon the chase. It was now 5:30.

Ten minutes earlier Patrolman Frank Panzanella of the Conway Police Department had left a local hotel where he had drunk a cup of coffee. He got into his car, drove from Second Avenue to Eleventh Street, and turned left, heading up a hill. On his right, he spotted a shiny object that he first took to be a reflection off an airplane. As he related in a signed statement for the Air Force's Project Blue Book:

I got to Mickey's Lounge on the top of the hill and I looked back and it wasn't moving so I turned the police car around and came back down 11th Street and went to Adamowski Service Station on 10th Street and Route 65. I then got out of the police car and looked at the object again. I rubbed my eyes 3 or 4 times but didn't say anything to anyone for the time being. I saw 2 other patrol cars pull up and the officers got out of the car and asked me if I saw it. I replied [sic] SAW WHAT! They pointed to the object and I told them I had been watching it for the last 10 minutes. The object was the shape of a half of [a] football, was very bright and about 25 to 35 feet in diameter. The object then moved out towards Harmony Township approximately 1,000



feet high, then it stopped then went straight up real fast to about 3,500 feet.

As they were watching the object, the officers could also see the moon. Venus was to its immediate right. The UFO was to the left.

Enigmatic intercept. Panzanella called Rochester police radio operator John Beighey and asked him to get in touch with the Greater Pittsburgh Airport. The object continued to hover, and an airliner passed underneath it. Panzanella communicated this information to Beighey. A short time later what looked like jet vapor trails appeared in the west or northwest, to the left of the object. A voice on Panzanella's radio announced that a jet interception was in progress. The UFO then shot high into the air and was lost to view.

Panzanella decided to wait at the spot in case the UFO returned. Meantime the two Ohio police cars left for the long ride back. They had hardly pulled away, however, when Panzanella got word from Beighey, who said the Air Force office at the Pittsburgh airport wanted to hear from the witnesses right away. He also said that in the course of his call, he had overheard someone at the airport say the object was "on the screen"—presumably radar screen. Panzanella turned on his pursuit light and caught up with Spaur, Neff, and Huston in Freedom just three minutes after their departure. Shortly before he stepped out of his car, he heard a fading voice on the radio say, "Hey, Frank, I saw two jets. . . ."

The caller, Patrolman Henry Kwaitanowski of Economy Borough, had been listening in on the exchange between Panzanella and Beighey from his position three miles slightly to the southeast of Conway. Standing by his vehicle, he spotted the jets, which looked like commercial airliners, flying away from him and toward the rising sun. Behind them, at some distance, was a shiny, football-shaped object of the same apparent size and elevation as the aircraft. He had watched this sight for two or three minutes before he could get through to Panzanella. Even so, his transmission faded out as he drove into a valley while speaking. Evidently his sighting began just as the one at Conway was ending.

The three Ohio officers went to the police station in Rochester, just north of Freedom, and Spaur called the Air Force at Pittsburgh. "Some colonel," as Spaur would remember him less than fondly, conducted a short, perfunctory interview, most of it devoted to an attempt to persuade the witness that he had seen something conventional. The "colonel" promised to forward the information to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Blue Book's base of operations, and hung up without speaking with anyone else. Spaur had just had his first taste of how the Air Force was dealing with even the most remarkable UFO sightings.

Meanwhile two police officers in Salem, Ohio, at the northern tip of Columbiana County, stopped at the station a few minutes before 5:30 and heard radio traffic about the UFO chase then taking place on 14/224. At that moment P-13 and the UFO were to the northwest of Salem, at Berlin Center in Mahoning

County. From the description of the UFO's direction, the officers, Lonny Johnson and Ray Esterly, thought there was a good chance it would pass near Salem. A few days later they told Weitzel:

We went to Prospect Street partway down the hill, when we saw the object in the distance (east) at an elevation of approximately 25 degrees, estimated altitude 10,000-20,000 feet. . . . Actually, first we saw one jet, then the object in front of it. We could see the jet, the exhaust space, and the contrail. The jet seemed at the same altitude of [sic] the object, going (both) southeast. The jet seemed to be pursuing the object. While we watched, for an estimated time of no more than two minutes, we saw two more jets coming from behind, in the same direction. These two had arcing contrails, either down or curved horizontally. The object was (Esterly) less than 3 or even (Johnson) 1 mile(s) away, in front of the first jet. The other two were about 10 miles back.

The object was a bright ball, about 5 times the size of the jet behind it. Its color was reddish orange, perhaps from sky reflection. Brighter than the planes. We could hear no noise from the object, nor from the jets. The object's brightness did not vary.

We returned to the Salem Police station when the four objects flew out of view. . . . The UFO appeared to be in level flight all the time while we watched it. When we came in, the pursuit vehicle reported its location as near (the object was above) Firestone Farms, east of Columbiana.

While Johnson and Esterly were at the site watching the objects, they radioed in to the station to report the observation. Moments later radio operator Jack Cramer and Police Lt. Richard Whinnery were startled to hear an unfamiliar voice, speaking more loudly and clearly than the other radio voices, say, "I'm going down to take a look at it. . . . I'm right above it. . . . It's about 45 feet across, and it's trailing something."

This incident is odd for several reasons. Their statement 11 days after the fact notwithstanding (when their error presumably had been pointed out to them), Johnson and Esterly originally thought the object was along 14A, miles closer than in fact it was. Moreover, the jets and the UFO were to the witnesses' east rather than to their west, and all were at a greater altitude than the object in P-13's sights. And of course Spaur and Neff made no specific claim about seeing jets. (One, however, was made for them by Panzanella, who recalled in an interview with Weitzel that he and the two Ohio officers had "seen two streaks, and that was after we made the call, these two white streaks, you know how your planes leave that at a high altitude? . . . To [the UFO's] left toward the sunrise"—evidently the same thing Kwaitanowski was seeing from his vantage point at Economy Borough.



Weitzel would conclude, "The UFO in this case . . . *seems* to have been a different one; it was larger and higher than the one P-13 was following."

Columbiana County Sheriff's Deputy Dave Brothers also reported seeing aircraft in the vicinity of the (or at least a) UFO. He told Weitzel:

I don't know what time it was, but I started listening to it on the radio when that Portage County deputy was following down Rt. 14. I was out on Rt. 14A west of Salem, and I was under the opinion that they was [sic] coming in on 14 into Salem, but they was [sic] on northern 14, and they came into Canfield. I didn't realize the speed that he was running, so I turned to the east and started chasing after them. But the speed they were running, I couldn't catch up; I was about two or three minutes behind it all the time. But about all I saw in the sky was, I did see three airplanes, which was denied in the newspaper, [which said] that there was no airplane. I saw the three planes, and they were going in the same direction, east, into Pennsylvania; and the planes left a little vapor trail, but they weren't jets. . . . They were running too slow for jets, because I was keeping up to them. . . . I could make out the image of what they were, airplanes. And I only saw one jet, but that was farther east, and it looked like he was . . . coming west, and he just turned around and went back east, because you could see this vapor trail, when he turned around and went east. But other than that, I never spotted that object they were chasing.

An Associated Press dispatch reported what seemed to be confirmation of an attempted jet intercept: "Reports . . . came from Air Force Reserve pilots based at Youngstown [Ohio] who said they attempted to follow the object but that its speed—estimated at 100 miles an hour—was too slow for their jet trainers." The Air Force would deny that it sent jets after a UFO that morning, and the Federal Aviation Agency at Pittsburgh said it had tracked nothing unusual on radar.

Despite considerable effort Weitzel could not resolve the issue:

I checked in person at Sheriff's Office Base Radio Stations in Portage, Columbiana, and Mahoning Counties, the Youngstown Police Department, Salem Police Department, and Chippewa Barracks, Pennsylvania[,] State Police. Could not track down the source of rumors (and signed statements) about jet or radar reports. John Beighey, Rochester Police Radio Operator, denies hearing jet or radar reports such as Panzanella mentions, and is reluctant to discuss the event. Panzanella claims something may have come via phone-microphone, if Beighey had his button down; but there is still a conflict between Beighey's and Panzanella's testimony.

Weitzel deemed it marginally possible that aircraft radio transmissions, on a different frequency from that used by the police radio, could have been picked up by the officers on the ground. Eventually, however, Weitzel could only shrug his

shoulders and concede that he had no choice but to accept the Air Force denials. It is certainly possible that the jets and other planes were no more than random air traffic having no relationship to the UFO; the witnesses may have only assumed a connection. This explanation, of course, does not tie up all loose ends, but it may have to do in the absence of any further evidence bearing on the question.

Other witnesses. In the course of their respective inquiries, Blue Book and NICAP interviewed only police eyewitnesses. But there were other witnesses mentioned in some local newspaper accounts.

Possibly, though far from certainly, the entire episode began in southwestern Michigan, in Benton Harbor, on the shores of Lake Michigan. In the early morning hours of the seventeenth, according to a United Press International story, three garbage collectors saw a strange object hovering over a motel. It was so bright that "you couldn't look straight at it." They notified police, who saw the object ascend.

At around 5 a.m. two New Castle, Pennsylvania, couples, driving south from Sharon a few miles from the Ohio border, spotted an object above a field to their right (west). Various descriptions as looking like a "hamburger" or an "ice cream cone," it was brilliant and hard to stare at, "sort of like looking into a spotlight." Thinking at first it was a "reflection" (not the only witnesses to harbor that initial impression), they stopped the car and rolled down their windows. It was no reflection. It stopped when they did, and when they stopped a second time, it did the same. At one point it flew across the road and positioned itself to their left (east). Always a quarter to a half mile in the air, it disappeared in the distance after a few miles.

It is too bad that no one besides a New Castle newspaper reporter spoke with the couples. *If* their estimate of the time is correct, one might speculate that they saw the second UFO that *may* have been operating in the area. *If* their estimate is off by half an hour and it was really closer to 5:30, they may have seen the last of Spaur's UFO.

A Newton Falls, Ohio, woman, Thelma James, "saw two strange brilliant objects in the southeast sky early Sunday morning," a newspaper reported. She had awakened at 3:50, looked out her bedroom window, and saw an object, which she later described as basketball-sized (whatever that meant) and "shiny silver," sitting motionless in the sky. Unable to get back to sleep, she glanced from time to time at the sky. Each time the object was at a higher elevation, ascending so slowly that its motion was not visible. There can be no question that this was an eminently identifiable flying object: the planet Venus. On April 17 Venus rose at 3:35 a.m. EST and was a brilliant presence (magnitude -4.0) in the southeastern sky. But that is not the end of the story. Around 5:15 a.m. a "much larger" second object appeared, much closer to the horizon but also to the southeast (where P-13's UFO would have been at that juncture). From Mrs. James's distant perspective this object looked like a crescent—an apparent reference to its glowing bottom half—and a dazzling brilliant yellow. It was too far away for further details to be discerned. It ascend-



ed and was lost to view around 5:30. Again it is unfortunate that none of the investigators interviewed this witness, who saw *both* Venus and the UFO—in defiance of those who soon would insist that the two were one.

Investigation and controversy. Within hours the episode was a national sensation. Ufologist William Weitzel, a philosophy instructor at a local college, heard about it on a Pittsburgh radio station and alerted members of NICAP Pennsylvania Subcommittee #1, of which he was director. In short order Weitzel would be heading for Ravenna. He would be not only the first competent investigator on the scene but arguably the *only* competent investigator to appear at any time.

Weitzel started out unpromisingly on a photographic case. A Mantua, Ohio, police officer photographed an object in the sky at 5 a.m. The “UFO” turned out to be Venus. But by the time he was through, several weeks later, Weitzel and his associates had spoken with all police eyewitnesses as well as many other individuals, including those who had monitored developments over police radio.

The Air Force investigation did not begin until the eighteenth, a Monday, and consisted of phone calls to area news outlets to find out what they knew (not a great deal) and checks with various official agencies in search of a weather balloon. None could be found. In any case, weather data indicated that the wind at near-ground level was so slight that it could not have driven anything Spaur and Neff could not have easily caught up with. Air Force personnel at Youngstown and Pittsburgh denied that any aircraft had been aloft or that anything out of the ordinary had shown up on radar.

That same day Maj. Hector Quintanilla, Jr., head of Project Blue Book, called Spaur from Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton, Ohio. After introducing himself as “Mr. Quintanilla,” he asked Spaur a few questions. According to Spaur, Quintanilla opened the exchange with this request: “Tell me about this mirage you saw.” In Spaur’s account, “When I started to tell him about what we chased, he asked, ‘Did you have it in view for more than a few minutes?’ I told him Barney and I had pursued it across several counties out of the state, for over a half hour. Then he kind of lost interest. . . . That’s all he asked me. Hell, I talked longer with that colonel Sunday morning, and *he* didn’t ask much.”

Still, that would be longer than Quintanilla or any other Air Force representative would talk with any other witness before Blue Book publicly announced its explanation of the sighting on Friday, April 22. Before that, however, Quintanilla spoke briefly with Spaur in a second phone conversation. This time Quintanilla wanted to know if Spaur was certain he had seen the object for more than a few minutes. Spaur said he was, and that was the extent of the exchange. On the twenty-second Portage County Sheriff Ross Dustman took a call from the Blue Book head, who said the case was now solved: the deputies had first seen an Echo satellite moving from northwest to southeast, and when it was out of sight, Spaur had mistaken Venus for the same object. His belief that the object had maneuvered in

the sky was an illusion occasioned by changes in their relative direction on the highway. When Quintanilla was finished, Dustman “laughed out loud,” in his words.

Not surprisingly, this identification struck many others as not a little fanciful. Dustman told UPI, “I go along with my men. It was not a satellite and not Venus. I’ve seen Venus many times, but I never saw Venus 50 feet above a road and moving from side to side like this was. . . . I have never seen Venus controlled like this seemed to be.” Spaur remarked to Weitzel, “I don’t know how much investigation [the Air Force] made, but evidently it wasn’t a very lengthy one, or it didn’t involve me. First of all I don’t think we have a satellite that can go this low. . . . I’m definitely sure that I wasn’t chasing Venus or observing Venus and running wildly over the countryside. I’m not quite that bad off.”

The Air Force statement did not mention any of the other witnesses, including Neff. It had interviewed none of them. Spaur became the focus of attention—and ridicule. At first the latter was “well meaning,” so he thought. Soon, however, the ridicule would be unrelenting, and it would take a devastating toll.

In the meantime Weitzel was feeling severely irritated. He, not Blue Book, had done the real investigative footwork, and the Echo/Venus theory was so preposterous that no knowledgeable person would ever have advanced it. When *Ravenna Record-Courier* reporter Carol Clapp informed him that Congressman William Stanton, whose Eleventh District constituency included Portage County, wanted to know more, Weitzel wrote Stanton a four-page letter outlining the inadequacies of Blue Book’s claims. A few days later Portage County Judge Robert E. Cook also wrote Stanton, characterizing the Air Force explanation as “ridiculous. . . . I personally know the three officers involved. They are men of integrity and I feel it is grossly unfair to them for the Air Force to reach any conclusion in this matter until it has conducted an on-the-spot investigation and re-evaluated its findings after such a visit.”

Stanton turned Weitzel’s letter as well as his investigative report over to the Air Force Commanding General. When he had not received a reply after almost two weeks, he took matters into his own hands. He went personally to the Pentagon and spoke with Air Force Lt. Col. John Spaulding, Chief of the Community Relations Division. Spaulding conceded that Blue Book ought to have sent an investigator to the site. It would do so shortly, he promised.

On May 9 Spaur heard from Quintanilla, whose renewed interest in the case clearly was sparked less by intellectual curiosity than by pressure from Washington. Quintanilla said he would be in Ravenna the next day to interview Spaur. The deputy called Weitzel and asked him if he would be there to tape the exchange; nothing in the Air Force’s conduct to date had inspired confidence, and Spaur wanted a record of the meeting. Weitzel readily agreed, then tried to bring Panzanella and Huston to Ravenna as well. Neither could get away from work. Nonetheless, when he arrived at the courthouse, a visibly unhappy Quintanilla met not only Spaur but Sheriff Dustman, two reporters (Clapp and Tom Schley, of the *Beaver*



*County Times*), Weitzel, and space-scientist/ufologist Dave Webb. Neff and Deputy Robert Wilson soon joined the group in a second-floor office. Not long afterwards Quintanilla asked Weitzel and Webb to leave the room, and soon Clapp and Schley left on their own. But the tape recorder continued to document the proceedings.

The meeting did not go well. Quintanilla himself would characterize it as “unpleasant.” He tried to get Spaur to accept the Air Force explanation, an effort that only frustrated and incensed the witness. Here is a portion of the exchange:

*Quintanilla:* . . . . I don’t know whether you realize it or not, but there are at least 30 satellites that are visible to the naked eye. And these things have a northeasterly and a southeasterly component. . . . And I checked *thoroughly*. . . . And *this* is why I made the determination specifically, because of the directions which you *gave* me. That you had first spotted the satellite coming over, and then focused on Venus. Venus at that night, that’s a typical night, was at a magnitude of -3.9. Which is the brightest thing in the sky, except for the moon. . . .

*Spaur:* Well, I don’t know anything about it, but . . . I’m under the impression that . . . [you are saying] I have a misconception of—

*Q:* No, you aren’t, Dale. It’s not a misconception, Dale. It’s—you’re not the first to chase that.

*S:* No. . . . I know damn well I wasn’t chasing a satellite, first of all—

*Q:* You weren’t chasing a satellite. I didn’t say you were chasing a satellite.

*S:* . . . . I think that if it was in the atmosphere as close as *this* thing was, as large as it was, it would have probably burned up at that speed. Second of all, I’m under the impression that our satellites doesn’t [sic] stop and go and go up and down. . . .

*Q:* Well, they zig-zag. They don’t zig-zag ‘cause a satellite is in perfect motion. But it gives you the *illusion* of zig-zagging. It gives the *illusion* of movement. But it’s not because the satellite itself is moving, it’s because the eyeball *does* this. Your eyes, my eyes, his eyes.

The conversation then switched to Venus:

*S:* . . . . Now, this, this thing is this large—this big and this low. . . . I follow it, and I have Barney with me. We’re going down the road. So you’re gonna discount, well, there’s two nuts. We’re running Venus. Now *Venus*—

*Q:* Now, now wait a minute—

*S:* Well, wait a minute, let me speak—

*Q:* —you used the wrong word—

S: —okay, well—

Q: I'm an officer in the United States Air Force.

S: Right. You definitely are.

Q: And I don't call anybody a nut!

S: No. Okay. I have hallucinations then! But this is what I've been saying—

Q: I didn't say you were having hallucinations—

S: What I'm trying to say is this: I'm going down the road. Now this thing that I am following—

Q: —and treat me with the same respect that I treat you.

S: I *will*, sir. I am. I'll treat you with more respect than I've been treated the last—

Q: I'm not calling you a nut. I'm not saying you had hallucinations.

S: —all right, the last 20 days! . . .

The argument went on, with neither side conceding an inch to the other. Finally:

Q: *Dale*, it's not a question of discounting. . . . We're trying to make the determination as to what it was.

S: Sir, if I could tell you what it was, believe me, Major. . . . [I]f I had told you that I [had] seen a Ford going down the highway, you'd know what I was talking about. And if you said, "Gee, there goes a Chevrolet," you would assume . . . that you identified it and I know what it is. The same thing with an aircraft . . . and it's identified. This, I have never seen nothing [sic] like it before or after, or in the wildest far-fetched imagination. . . . [I]n my wildest dreams I don't think I could have ever imagined or seen anything like it . . . but it *definitely* was there. . . . I don't believe for an instant that I was following Venus.

Shortly afterwards Weitzel, Webb, and the reporters were allowed back into the room. Weitzel and Quintanilla erupted into a testy exchange as the former tried to argue that the Echo/Venus explanation could not be squared with the testimony of the witnesses, some of whom Quintanilla indicated he had never heard of. The major frostily excused himself.

If Quintanilla could claim credit (or blame, depending on one's point of view) for the Echo part of the explanation, Venus was the brainchild of William T. Powers, systems engineer at Dearborn Observatory, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. The observatory's director, J. Allen Hynek, was the chairman of Northwestern's astronomy department. Hynek was also Blue Book's chief scientific



consultant. On the evening of April 17, Powers conducted a 20-minute phone interview with Spaur. After the Blue Book explanation was released, Powers wrote an apologetic letter to Spaur and Neff:

Apparently I found out considerably more about this event than the Air Force investigator did, because I cannot agree with the evaluation publicly released a few days after the sighting. What you reported to me could not possibly lead to such a conclusion: a satellite satisfies none of the characteristics of your reported object. As a matter of fact, Dr. Hynek agrees with this. He was not consulted before this news release was put forth.

I thought at first that during the latter part of your experience, after you had lost the object and then re-acquired it, that you and Mr. Houston [sic] might have spotted Venus, and thought it was the same object at a higher altitude: I spoke to Major Quintanilla on the telephone at the time I gave him the results of my telephone interview, and told him of this idea. Now I have additional information, chiefly from Mr. William Weitzel, which appears to make that hypothesis incorrect. I now understand that you and other witnesses did notice Venus and the Moon, and saw the object in motion relative to them, as well as being able to see a shape. At no time, however, did I suppose that the earlier part of the sighting involved anything other than an airborne object.

Weitzel and NICAP, aided somewhat by Congressman Stanton (who wrote Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara complaining about Blue Book's handling of his constituents' sighting), persisted in their attempt to persuade the Air Force to change its assessment and to place the report into the "unidentified" category. On May 17, in a letter to Quintanilla, Weitzel raised numerous questions about the official theory. For months afterwards he phoned or wrote various Air Force functionaries. Eventually Hynek himself urged Blue Book to change its classification. Another scientist-investigator, University of Arizona atmospheric physicist James E. McDonald, also joined the lobbying effort; to him the Echo/Venus theory was an obvious "absurdity." He would remark:

The fact that Officer Huston saw the object coming in out of the northwest clearly rules out his seeing Venus, yet at that time the first two officers had been following the object for a much longer time than Echo requires to transit the full sky. This, plus the four-witness description of vertical ascent at the termination of the sighting[,] are [sic] calmly swept aside.

Nevertheless Blue Book withstood the onslaught and stubbornly stood by the Echo/Venus identification, which remains the official explanation of the case. Six years later, in his book *The UFO Experience* (1972), Hynek devoted eight pages to the incident, which he cited as a particularly flagrant example of Blue Book's scientific incompetence:

Three months later [after the incident's occurrence] I was sent the Blue Book file on the case; my evaluation was a strong "Unidentified"—an evaluation that was strongly supported by the fact that it had been established . . . that the observers had seen Venus *as well as* the UFO. The officers did not know Venus by name, but they confirmed that there was a "bright spot near the moon." On that morning Venus was just a few degrees to the upper right of the moon. The observers indicated that as the dawn light increased just before sunrise, the silhouette of the UFO became more distinguishable; quite the opposite would have happened with Venus as dawn light brightened. The sun rose that day at 5:42 a.m., and the sighting was terminated shortly after that. It didn't matter. My advice was not taken.

Sequel. For Spaur, whom both the Air Force and the media treated as if only he had seen (or thought he had seen) the UFO, the incident became a nightmare, in both the figurative and literal sense. To those who knew few of the details or for whom the very notion of UFOs was nonsensical, he would be the fool who chased a satellite and a planet. The ridicule would be relentless.

All of this occurred in spite of Spaur's manifestly sober assessment of his experience. He refused to speculate about what the object was. The publicity he received was nothing he sought out—in fact, he hated it ("it was as though everybody owned me")—and he never sought profit from the sighting. And yet the ridicule and harassment went on to destroy his marriage and his job.

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The last public word of Dale Spaur came in an Associated Press story in October, six months after the event. Reporter John de Groot found Spaur living in a small, \$60-a-week motel room in Solon, Ohio, and walking three miles every day to work as a painter. He sent the remaining \$20 of his \$80-a-week salary to his wife, who had filed for divorce. He had lost 40 pounds and was living, de Groot noted, on a sandwich and a bowl of cereal a day.

Every night Spaur would relive the first stage of the sighting in a horrifying dream that mixed real and surreal elements.

Daneise Spaur, Dale Spaur's estranged wife, told de Groot:

Something happened to Dale, but I don't know what it was. He came home that day and I never saw him more frightened before. He acted strange, listless. He just sat around. He was very pale.

Then later, he got real nervous. And he started to run away. He'd just disappear for days and days. I wouldn't see him.

Our marriage fell apart. All sorts of people came to the house. Investigators, reporters. They kept him up all night. They kept after him, hounding him. They hounded him right into the ground. And he changed.



One night Spaur walked into the house and, for reasons even he did not understand, flew into a rage. He grabbed his wife and shook her hard and long. Afterwards she filed assault-and-battery charges, and Spaur was briefly jailed. He turned in his badge and moved out of town.

Wilbur Neff's wife Jackelyne spoke of the toll the incident had taken on her husband: "I hope I never see him like he was after the chase. He was real white, almost in a state of shock. It was awful. And people made fun of him afterwards. He never talks about it anymore. Once he told me, 'If that thing landed in my back yard, I wouldn't tell a soul.' He's been through a ringer."

H. Wayne Huston, a seven-year veteran of the East Palestine police force, resigned from the force several months after the sighting and moved to Seattle to become a bus driver. Now styling himself Harold W. Huston, he said, "Sure, I quit because of that thing. People laughed at me. And there was pressure. You couldn't put your finger on it, but the pressure was there. The city officials didn't like police officers chasing flying saucers."

A last attempt to discredit the sighting appeared in a 1981 book, *The UFO Verdict*, by debunker Robert Sheaffer. In Sheaffer's opinion Spaur and Neff saw Venus, then a balloon. Having offered this negative assessment of the witnesses' eyesight and good sense, Sheaffer went on to make unflattering observations about Spaur's personal life. Sheaffer's hypothesis begs as many questions as Blue Book's and merits as little credence.

Three decades after its appearance, the object that Spaur and Neff chased through northeastern Ohio and into Pennsylvania remains unidentified.

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## PROJECT BLUE BOOK

In March 1952 the U.S. Air Force's UFO-investigation group Project Grudge, having been reinvigorated since the appointment the previous September of Capt. Edward J. Ruppelt as its head, was upgraded and given a new formal name, Aerial Phenomena Group, and codename, Project Blue Book.

With reports on the upswing, Ruppelt laid plans for a more comprehensive investigation than any done previously. With Air Technical Intelligence Center's (ATIC's) electronic, analysis, and investigating groups, as well as the radar section, cooperating fully with Blue Book, Ruppelt hoped to gather hard data. On March 19 he and other ATIC representatives briefed the Air Defense Command (ADC) leadership and asked its assistance in getting scope-camera film of UFOs as they were being tracked on ADC radar.

Exactly one week later Ruppelt met with Cambridge Research Laboratory scientists (known as the Beacon Hill Group) who advised the Air Force on technical matters. "Several excellent suggestions were offered," according to a classified Blue Book Status Report (No. 5, dated March 31, 1952). "One was to employ sound



detection apparatus in the location where concentrations of sightings have been reported. . . . In the future, cameras, professionally termed 'patrol cameras', will be developed that can detect such objects."

During a visit to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, where Blue Book was headquartered, physicist Joseph Kaplan, an Air Force Scientific Advisory Board member, suggested a special diffraction grid be placed on patrol cameras, allowing spectrum analysis of apparent UFOs. This spectrum, Blue Book noted, would then be "matched with the spectrum of known objects. . . . The system will afford a means of determining whether reported objects are actually some new type of aircraft or merely misidentification."

On April 5 Air Force Letter 200-5 directed intelligence officers at bases everywhere to report UFO sightings immediately. Copies of these reports were to go to all major Air Force commands, the Air Force director of intelligence, and ATIC. The letter indicated that Blue Book personnel could contact any Air Force unit directly, bypassing the chain of command.

Ruppelt and Blue Book were kept busy dealing with an enormous wave of sightings in mid-1952. Blue Book's eighth status report (December 31, 1952) stated, "During the period 1 Jun 52 to 31 Oct 52 . . . 886 reports have been received. . . . This total of 886 represents 149 more reports than had been received during the previous five-year period this project has been in existence." The figure did not include the 800 reports that had come in via letters from the public.

That summer J. Allen Hynek, an Ohio State University astronomer and Blue Book scientific consultant, spoke with 44 fellow astronomers and solicited their views of the UFO phenomenon. Hynek learned that five had seen UFOs themselves. "This is a higher percentage than among the public at large," he observed.

Blue Book's dealings with scientists were pursued more formally with Battelle Memorial Institute personnel, who in late 1951 had been contracted by the Air Force to collect and analyze UFO data. ATIC was also working on Kaplan's plan to place two-lens stereo cameras—with a diffraction grating over one lens—at air bases and on some F-86 interceptor aircraft. The ADC ordered personnel to put radarscope cameras on 24-hour alert, for use immediately upon the tracking of an unidentified target. Blue Book also planned to put "visual spotting stations" in northern New Mexico, an area that (as Ruppelt put it) "still consistently produced more reports than any other area in the U.S." These stations would be equipped with instruments and cameras.

Historian David M. Jacobs has written that "1952 marked the high point of the Air Force's UFO investigation." For James E. McDonald, a University of Arizona atmospheric physicist who conducted an intensive study of the UFO question until his death in 1971,

the 24 months from October, 1951 through September, 1953, emerge as a kind of "heroic period" of Air Force investigations . . . the one inter-

val during which UFOs were seriously and relatively vigorously investigated. . . . Just before that period lay the “Dark Ages”, as Ruppelt aptly labeled the 1949-51 era of Projects Sign and Grudge; and shortly after 1953 began a sort of new dark age when debunking and superficial investigations once again came to characterize [Blue Book’s] response to the UFO problem.

The new dark age. The clogging of intelligence channels during the outbreak of UFO sightings over Washington, D.C., in late July 1952 had upset the Central Intelligence Agency, which feared that a hostile foreign power could take advantage of this sort of communications logjam (see Washington National Radar/Visual Case). This concern, shared by some high-ranking Air Force officers, led to the convening, between January 14 and 17, 1953, of a CIA-sponsored meeting in Washington, at which a small group of skeptical scientists considered and rejected UFO evidence presented in briefings by Ruppelt, Hynek, and others (see Robertson Panel). UFOs might not be a threat to national security, but *belief* in them was, in the CIA scientists’ estimation; such belief could cause hysteria and could be manipulated by “skillful hostile propaganda.” From now on official efforts should be oriented toward debunking.

From then on Ruppelt’s ambitions for a more sophisticated, better-financed investigation were to be frustrated. The various plans to put observers and instruments in place were abandoned, and Blue Book’s staff was reduced. In February 1953 Ruppelt suggested that an ADC unit, the 4602nd Air Intelligence Service Squadron (AISS), conduct Blue Book’s field investigations; by the end of the year it had taken on the task.

When Ruppelt left Blue Book in February for a temporary assignment elsewhere, a staff officer, Lt. Robert Olsson, took his place, and when Ruppelt returned, he found himself in charge of a project that consisted in its entirety of two subordinates and him. On his departure in August, the leadership of Blue Book was given to a noncommissioned officer.

That same month the Air Force issued Regulation 200-2, which instructed air base officers on how to handle UFO reports and ordered them to discuss them publicly only if they were judged to have been solved; otherwise they should be classified—at the minimum—at the Restricted level. To critics of the Air Force such as author Donald E. Keyhoe this was evidence of a UFO cover-up; to those who knew of the CIA panel, however, this was simply a response to its recommendation to discourage popular interest and speculation.

The once-monthly Blue Book status reports were issued with decreasing frequency, with a greater emphasis on the solution of cases and, as Hynek would remark acidly many years later, the “issuance of propaganda and public relations handouts, which were often ill-considered and contradictory.”



Capt. Charles Hardin was appointed Blue Book director in March 1954. The 4602nd assumed a larger and larger role in investigation and analysis, leaving Hardin with relatively little to do, which was fine with him, according to a private memorandum Ruppelt wrote. "He definitely doesn't believe in UFOs," Ruppelt noted; "in fact he thinks that anyone who is even interested is crazy. They bore him."

In February 1955 ATIC told AISS' commander that the purpose of the investigation was to minimize the number of unsolved cases. To accomplish that, according to Jacobs,

the Air Force now broadened the identified category to include probable and possible. These vague subcategories allowed the investigators to identify a report based on their estimate of the probability that the sighting was [of] a known phenomenon. If investigators could not definitely identify a sighting, they could solve the problem, and the case, by placing it in one of these two broadly defined categories. In press releases and final Blue Book evaluation statistics, the probable and possible subcategories disappeared and Blue Book listed the sightings as identified.

By the end of 1956 the number of cases listed as unsolved had dwindled to 0.4 percent, from a high of 20 to 30 percent in earlier years.

Though the Battelle Memorial Institute study was completed in 1954, it was not released to the public until October 25, 1955, incorporated into Project Blue Book Special Report No. 14. The report declared it was "highly improbable that any of the reports of unidentified aerial objects examined in this study represent observations of technological developments outside the range of present-day knowledge." Though critics would argue that the report's own data indicated otherwise, it was lauded in the press as the final word on UFOs.

In April 1956 Capt. George T. Gregory took over Blue Book and led it in an even firmer anti-UFO direction than had the apathetic Hardin. In July of the next year, after the 4602nd was disbanded, the 1006th AISS took over what now passed for UFO investigations, then saw its funding reduced. (The 1127th Field Activities Group assumed investigative responsibilities in July 1959 but seldom acted on them.) A revised AFR 200-2, issued in February 1958, stated the obvious: "Air Force activities must reduce the percentage of unidentifieds to the minimum."

Maj. Robert J. Friend took over Blue Book in October 1958. Friend's efforts to upgrade the files and catalog sightings according to various observed characteristics were frustrated by lack of funding and assistance. In 1959 ATIC considered dumping Blue Book, then decided to try to transfer it to the Air Research and Development Command and, failing that, to the Secretary of the Air Force's Office of Information, which was not interested either.

Beginning in February 1959, Hynek brought together ATIC and Blue Book staffers in a series of informal meetings. Members of the group agreed that even-

tually the term “unidentified flying objects” should be jettisoned and old cases—the ones private ufologists were reviving in an effort to show UFOs remained unexplained—be reexamined in light of “greater scientific knowledge” that would move them “from the ‘unknown’ category” to reclassification in the explained category. The group held its last meeting in 1960.

NICAP, Congress, and Blue Book. In January 1957 Donald Keyhoe assumed directorship of the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) and immediately set out to use it as a vehicle to pressure the Air Force to reveal what Keyhoe believed it knew about UFOs but wasn’t telling. (Keyhoe’s belief in a cover-up was based on his experience as both private journalist and NICAP head. From friends and other sources within the military he repeatedly was told of sightings, often of a dramatic, evidential nature, that—while, supposedly, officially reported—were absent from Blue Book records.)

NICAP included on its board of directors such luminaries as retired Rear Adm. Delmer S. Fahrney, who had headed the Navy’s missile program; retired Vice Adm. Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter, first CIA director; retired Air Force Maj. Dewey J. Fournet, Pentagon liaison officer for Blue Book; retired Rear Adm. Herbert B. Knowles; Albert M. Chop, former Air Force Pentagon press spokesman; and other military officers, scientists, clergy, and prominent citizens. In a much-publicized NICAP press conference, Fahrney implied that UFOs were visitors from outer space.

Keyhoe and NICAP lobbied hard, though with little success, for congressional hearings. In January 1958 the Senate Subcommittee on Government Operations briefly considered them, but Richard Horner, the Air Force’s assistant secretary for research and development, persuaded the subcommittee’s chief counsel that the hearings were neither good for the Air Force nor necessary for national security, since Blue Book had the situation well in hand. The following June Blue Book briefed several interested House members, who left convinced that hearings would serve no purpose. In August Blue Book head Capt. Gregory convinced the House Subcommittee on Atmospheric Phenomena that private groups such as NICAP were more interested in profits than facts and should be ignored.

In October the Air Force released a fact sheet that asserted that, owing to “refinements” in its investigatory procedures, unsolved sightings were now being reduced to negligible numbers (1.8 percent). At the same time a secret staff study by Air Force intelligence officers addressed the public-relations problems caused by Keyhoe, whom it characterized as a “political adventurer” now allied with Ruppelt. This was a bizarre and false allegation; in 1957 Ruppelt had refused Keyhoe’s offer to become a NICAP adviser and had privately embraced—and by 1959 would publicly endorse—Blue Book’s anti-UFO line. Both Keyhoe and Ruppelt, the study charged, were in the UFO “business” strictly for the money; yet together they “represent a formidable team from which plenty of trouble can be expected.”

The study recommended that 18 to 20 personnel be assigned to temporary UFO-investigation duty; they would investigate—and presumably solve—reports,



such as those published in newspapers, that had not been sent directly to Blue Book. These were the kinds of reports NICAP and other civilian organizations found useful for their purposes, and the Air Force needed to counter their efforts. Though ATIC urged implementation of the plan, Air Force Headquarters killed it.

Blue Book's albatross. From April 1952 onward Air Force UFO policy had been spelled out in AFR-202, which was subject to occasional revision and updating. ("AFR" stands for Air Force Regulation.) Until the issuance of the September 1959 version of AFR-202, the Air Force's interest was defined in two ways: as a potential security issue and as information-gathering on "experimentation and development of new air vehicles." The 1959 edition, however, added a third:

Air Force activities must reduce the percentage of unidentifieds to the minimum. Analysis thus far has provided explanation for all but a few of the sightings reported. These unexplained sightings are carried statistically as unidentifieds. If more immediate, detailed objective data on the unidentifieds had been available, probably these too could have been explained. [But human factors in reporting make it] improbable that all of the unidentifieds can be eliminated.

The rush to reduce the percentage of unidentifieds—which the revised 1959 AFR only codified; the practice had been in effect since 1953—produced an often jarring disjuncture between reports and the explanations the official Air Force project, Blue Book, offered for them. Moreover, as its own chief scientific consultant, J. Allen Hynek, would complain in later years:

No real attempt was ever made to gather all the data that were available. The air force investigators had not bothered to gather what was there. In many instances, starting from a mere item on the back pages of a small town newspaper, I have been able to reconstruct, with the patient aid of the observers, a coherent account of reported events. . . . Blue Book files are replete with cases labeled "Insufficient Information," whereas in many cases the proper label should have been "Insufficient Follow-up."

The 1954 revision had given only one paragraph to "Release of Facts," in other words to the question of public relations. It permitted local bases to respond to queries about sightings from reporters

when the object is positively identified as a familiar object. . . . For those objects which are not explainable, only the fact that ATIC will analyze the data is worthy of release, due to the many unknowns involved.

But the 1959 version devoted all of five paragraphs to "Public Relations, Information, Contacts and Releases." Now all UFO information, "regardless of origin or nature," could be released only through the Office of Information Services, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, at the Pentagon, though the commander of

a local base could answer inquiries about an area sighting only if the object had been *"positively identified as a familiar or known object."* The sentiment was the same, but the italics were a new addition, as if to emphasize the necessity of saying nothing about unidentifieds. It also said the Air Force would make "every effort" to distance itself from outside information released by "newsmen, writers, publishers, or private individuals" who often held views unacceptable to Blue Book. To stress the point, the final paragraph read:

Contacts. Private individuals or organizations requesting Air Force interviews, briefing, lectures, or private discussions on UFO's will be referred to the Office of Information Services. . . . Air Force personnel, other than those of the Office of Information Services, will not contact private individuals on UFO cases nor will they discuss their operations and functions with unauthorized persons unless so directed. . . .

A directive from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in effect since December 1953, further sought to restrict popular access to official information about UFO sightings. Joint-Army-Navy-Air Force-Publication (JANAP) 146, under the subheading "Canadian-United States Communications Instructions for Reporting Vital Intelligence Sightings" (CIRVIS), made it a crime under the Espionage Act to share UFO reports with unauthorized personnel. Offenders would face a one- to 10-year prison term or \$10,000 fine. The prohibition applied even to commercial airline pilots who knew of its existence. "This action effectively stopped the flow of information to the public," Jacobs remarks. "Only if Blue Book could positively identify a sighting as a hoax or misidentification would the Air Force release information to the public. The policy was in effect until December 1969, when the Air Force terminated its involvement with UFOs."

Blue Book was circling the wagons. UFOs had proven a public-relations disaster for the Air Force. A growing popular view held that Blue Book's "explanations" were often inadequate or even laughable. Worse, many Americans suspected that the Air Force was engaged in a cover-up.

Unfortunately for the Air Force, policies such as those outlined in AFR-202 could only fuel suspicion and generate yet more skepticism of its pronouncements. In regularly issued press releases Blue Book insisted it had found no evidence of extraterrestrial visitation, as proof of which it cited the decreasing percentage of unknowns. Blue Book credited "improved procedures" with eliminating the number of unexplained reports. In reality, the only "procedures" that had been "improved" were bookkeeping ones.

Between 1956 and 1958, when Capt. Gregory headed the project, sightings were often summarily "explained" in several simple, albeit questionable and misleading, ways. Explanations first listed as "possible" were upgraded to "probable," and "probable" explanations to certain ones. According to Jacobs:



Blue Book extended the probable category to include sightings that represented no data to indicate the object could *not* have been an aircraft, balloon, and so forth. If a witness in his efforts to describe a UFO used words like *jet-like*, *balloon-like*, or *meteor-like*, Blue Book staff identified the object as a jet, balloon, or meteor. The staff did this even when the witness used the words to describe what the object did *not* look like. It also routinely placed some of the most interesting low-level or close encounter reports in the insufficient data category.

Sightings by young people between 10 to 17 years old were automatically deemed unreliable and imaginary. Reports that came to Blue Book through CIRVIS were labelled “insufficient data” with no attempt made to search out the missing data.

In July 1960 members of the House and Senate as well as the CIA asked for briefings on the Air Force’s handling of UFOs. On the fifteenth two CIA representatives, along with congressmen from the House Armed Services Committee (Richard Smart) and the House Science and Astronautics Committee (Spencer Bereford, Richard Hines, and Frank Hammit), met with Air Force representatives, who included not only Friend and Blue Book scientific consultant J. Allen Hynek but also three generals, one of them the director of intelligence, Maj. Gen. Luehman. Though earlier the Air Force had been able to satisfy congressional inquirers—in part by slandering its critics, especially the hated Keyhoe—this group listened skeptically. Cong. Smart even charged it with withholding information, and complaints were expressed about the scientific and investigative shortcomings of Blue Book’s approach. Smart told the Air Force that he expected his committee to be informed of all significant sightings and other developments in the future.

In response ATIC tried to add one more person to the Blue Book staff, which at that point would have raised its number to three, and to obtain additional funds for equipment and salaries. The formal request went to the assistant chief of staff for intelligence (AFCIN), who in September turned it down. ATIC did not relay this fact to Smart when he asked about Blue Book’s progress in November, but in early 1961 Blue Book managed to secure a modest funding increase that enabled it to have four officers placed on an on-call basis. This arrangement survived until Friend left the project in 1963.

Congressional interest in UFOs and Blue Book continued. The most influential congressional critic of Blue Book, Speaker John McCormack, was convinced that UFOs were real and extraordinary. Encouraged by Keyhoe, he asked Science and Astronautics Committee Chairman Overton Brooks to take a look at the question. Brooks made Cong. Joseph Karth head of a Subcommittee on Space Problems and Life Sciences, and Karth and two other members planned for hearings in early 1962. Friend, Hynek, and other ATIC representatives managed to persuade Karth, however, that the Air Force had the UFO problem well in hand; those who argued otherwise, such as Keyhoe and NICAP, were simply exploiting public fears for their own

purposes. Not long afterwards Brooks, who was sympathetic to hearings, died, and Cong. George P. Miller, who was not, succeeded him.

In August 1963 Friend left Blue Book, by now convinced that the project should be abandoned altogether, however unfavorable the public reaction might be. But Maj. Hector Quintanilla, who would lead Blue Book until its dissolution in 1969, was satisfied with the status quo. Things went on as before, with air base commanders conducting (as the 1959 AFR-202 put it) "all investigative action necessary to submit a complete initial report of a UFO sighting. Every effort will be made to resolve the sighting in the initial investigation." Only if Blue Book deemed further on-site investigation necessary would it conduct any further inquiries.

Hynek had this to say of the Quintanilla era:

When Major Quintanilla came in, the flag of the utter nonsense school was flying at its highest on the mast. Now he had a certain Sgt. [David] Moody assisting him. . . . [Moody] epitomized the conviction-before-trial method. Anything that he didn't understand or didn't like was immediately put into the psychological category, which meant "crackpot." He would not ever say that the person who reported a case was a fairly respectable person, maybe we should look into it, or maybe we should find out. He was also the master of the possible: possible balloon, possible aircraft, possible birds, which then became, by his own hand (and I argued with him violently at times), the probable; he said, well, we have no category "possible" aircraft. It is therefore either unidentified or aircraft. Well, it is more likely aircraft; therefore, it is aircraft. . . . An "unidentified" to Moody was not a challenge for further research. To have it remain unidentified was a blot . . . and he did everything to remove it. He went back to cases from Captain Gregory's days and way back into Ruppelt's days and redid the files. A lot that were unidentified in those days he "identified" years and years later.

A revised UFO regulation, issued in September 1966 as AFR 80-17, reflected a 1961 action in which ATIC was transformed into the Foreign Technology Division (FTD) of the Air Force Systems Command. Now bearing the heading "Research and Development" rather than "Intelligence," it mostly reiterated earlier requirements but now directed each "commander of an Air Force base [to] provide a UFO investigative capacity. . . . If possible, an individual selected as a UFO investigator should have a scientific or technical background as an investigator." Nonetheless, 80-17 instructed, "Do NOT solicit reports." The only reports to be considered were those communicated directly to the base in question.

The August 1965 wave and aftermath. The events that would culminate in the closing of Blue Book began in the summer of 1965. In early August a sighting wave erupted in the south-central United States and soon spread through the country.



On the evening of the first, a Sunday, numerous Texans reported a bewildering variety of aerial phenomena described variously as "multi-colored lights," "eggs," and "diamonds." As the night progressed, sightings spread to Arkansas, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Colorado, the Dakotas, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Washington. At Wichita weatherman John Shockley reported that he had tracked several unidentified objects on the Weather Bureau's radar; the objects flew at altitudes between 6000 and 9000 feet. Assistant Ellis Pike noted that the blips "looked much the same as an airliner's might." "Small and rather diffused," they brightened and dimmed on the screen, moving at 45 mph. Meanwhile, the Oklahoma Highway Patrol was reporting that Tinker AFB, Oklahoma City, had tracked UFOs—sometimes as many as four at a time—on its radar. According to the Patrol, several of the objects had dropped from 22,000 to 4000 feet in a matter of seconds, but the Air Force refused to confirm or deny the report.

One of the clearest reports came from an Air Force weather observer who asked to remain anonymous because of the service's anti-UFO stance. The object he saw over Norman, Oklahoma, was, in his words, "no mirage." Alternately viewing through 10-power binoculars and a 40-power telescope, he watched a mysterious structure follow an orbital path across the sky. "It was tilted at about 45 degrees," he said, "and then straightened out so I got a good look at it. It looked like Saturn with a flat top and a flat bottom. It was not a true sphere. There were two rings around it, and the rings were a part of the main body; they were not separated from it. . . . [It was] at least twice the size of a Boeing 707. . . . It was a distinct image—as clear as a person's face."

Maj. Hector Quintanilla, seated, and the staff at Project Blue Book.  
(Fortean Picture Library)





By daylight reports had subsided, and the Air Force already had an explanation: What had been seen were not spaceships but certain astronomical bodies—the planet Jupiter or the stars Rigel, Capella, Betelgeuse, or Aldebaran.

To many this was too much. Even a presumably neutral UPI reporter, writing out of Wichita, felt constrained to comment, “Ordinary radar does not pick up planets and stars.” A damning assessment of the Air Force pronouncement by Robert Risser, director of the Oklahoma Science and Art Foundation Planetarium in Oklahoma City, received widespread publicity: “That is as far from the truth as you can get. These stars and planets are on the opposite side of the earth from Oklahoma City at this time of year. The Air Force must have had its star-finder upside down during August.”

The editorial reaction was almost uniformly hostile. A typical response came from the *Richmond News Leader*: “Attempts to dismiss the reported sightings under the rationale as exhibited by Project Bluebook [sic] won’t solve the mystery . . . and serve only to heighten the suspicion that there’s something out there the Air Force doesn’t want us to know about.”

As the sightings spread across the nation, UFOs got respectful treatment, and even some heretofore-skeptical scientists were calling for a new investigation. More and more disenchanted with Blue Book but reluctant to express his misgivings publicly, Hynek sent the Air Force a proposal: set up a panel of civilian scientists to study the problem and to make recommendations about the UFO project’s future. The Air Force took Hynek’s suggestions seriously enough to take them to Gen. Arthur C. Agan, Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Operations. Agan concluded that Blue Book should be continued under FTD and that the project get increased support.

In a September 28 letter communicating Agan’s recommendations to the Military Director of the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board (AFSAB), Director of Information Maj. Gen. E. B. LeBailly remarked that UFO witnesses included reliable individuals; some of the reports were “spectacular,” and only a relatively small number ever came to the Air Force’s attention. LeBailly asked that a “working scientific panel composed of both physical and social scientists be organized to review Project Blue Book—its resources, methods, and findings—and to advise the Air Force as to any improvements that should be made in the program to carry out the Air Force’s assigned responsibility.”

A six-member Ad Hoc Committee to Review Project Blue Book, headed by Brian O’Brien, met on February 3, 1966. All but one (Carl Sagan) were members of AFSAB, and none had any sympathy with the idea that UFO reports represented anything extraordinary. Still, it was at least possible that something of interest could be learned from the study of individual sightings; thus Blue Book should “be strengthened to provide opportunity for scientific investigation of selected sightings in more detail and depth than has been possible to date.” Furthermore, the Air Force should negotiate contracts “with a few selected universities to provide scientific



teams to investigate promptly and in depth certain selected sightings of UFOs. . . . The universities should be chosen to provide good geographical distribution."

On the nights of March 20 and 21, numerous residents of Hillsdale and Dexter, Michigan, saw glowing UFOs. In the former case, an object described as a luminous football shape was seen hovering and maneuvering over a swampy area. Though these were unremarkable sightings compared to some, they got headline treatment in papers all over the country, perhaps reflecting a more open-minded attitude on the part of the mainstream press. When Michigan Cong. Weston Vivian asked for an official investigation, Quintanilla dispatched Hynek to the scene, and three days later, on March 25, Hynek addressed a crowded gathering of reporters at the Detroit Press Club. "It would seem to me," he said, "that the association of the sightings with swamps, in these particular cases, is more than coincidence." The phenomena witnesses were reporting "could have been due to the release of variable quantities of marsh gas."

As Herbert J. Strentz, author of a study of newspaper coverage of UFOs, would observe, "Press and public reactions to the 'swamp gas' theory were prompt, wide-ranging and generally hostile." A *New Yorker* article sneered, "Marsh gas is more appropriate an image of that special tediousness one glimpses in even the best scientific minds." The effect of Hynek's news conference could not have been what the Air Force intended. Now media were paying *more* attention to UFO stories. So were politicians. Michigan Cong. Gerald R. Ford, who also happened to be House Minority Leader, wrote the House Armed Services Committee and asked for hearings.

The hearing was held on April 5, but only three persons were asked to testify, all of them Air Force representatives: Secretary of the Air Force Harold Brown, Quintanilla, and Hynek. Brown stuck to Blue Book's script: UFOs neither threaten national security nor come from outer space, and the Air Force, which had conducted a "thorough" and "objective" investigation, had the situation in hand. In an allusion to the O'Brien Committee, however, he referred to the likely prospect of "even stronger emphasis on the scientific aspects of investigating the sightings that warrant extensive analysis." Quintanilla offered no formal statement.

Stung by the ridicule to which he had been subjected in the wake of the Detroit press conference, Hynek finally found the courage to state publicly what he had been saying privately for some time:

The press has described me as the "puppet of the Air Force" and has stated that I say only what the Air Force tells me to say. I would like to . . . read to the committee a statement . . . which has certainly not been dictated by the Air Force. . . .

[T]he kind of activity that the press has reported in Michigan is not unusual. It happened only that the Dexter and Hillsdale incidents, although of little scientific significance, have attracted national inter-

est. Now, similar incidents, and some considerably more intriguing, have been occurring for many years. . . . Despite the seeming inanity of the subject, I felt that I would be derelict in my scientific responsibility to the Air Force if I did not point out that the whole UFO phenomenon might have aspects to make it worthy of scientific attention. . . . I am happy that my appearance before this committee affords me a chance to reiterate my recommendations. Specifically, it is my opinion that the body of data accumulated since 1948 . . . deserves close scrutiny by a civilian panel of physical and social scientists, and that this panel should be asked to examine the UFO problem critically for the express purpose of determining whether a major problem really exists.

Committee Chairman L. Mendel Rivers agreed that an independent civilian study was a good idea. So did the Air Force, which recognized it as a way of ridding itself of its UFO albatross. Secretary Brown assigned the Air Force Office of Scientific Research (AFOSR) the task of implementing the O'Brien Committee's recommendations. AFOSR's in-house analysis led it to decide that one university rather than several should be given the assignment. Approached informally, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University expressed zero interest in taking on such a controversial topic. But on October 6, 1966, the University of Colorado signed on to do the study, under the direction of prominent physicist Edward U. Condon. Though the study was hailed and portrayed as an impartial one—and for a time many, including Hynek, believed it was—Condon was deeply skeptical, even contemptuous, of the subject. From the beginning he and the Air Force understood that the conclusions of the University of Colorado UFO Project would be negative.

By 1968 the Condon Committee (its informal name) was beset with conflict and embarrassing publicity, much of it associated with the firing of personnel who did not share Condon's ever less concealed antipathy to the UFO phenomenon. In its May 14 issue the mass-circulation magazine *Look* carried an article on the committee's problems under the title "Flying Saucer Fiasco." *Science* also reported on the disputes and disarray within the project.

In September of that year, Hynek was surprised to get a letter from Col. Raymond S. Sleeper, the FTD commander. It was, Hynek would write a few years later, "the first time in my 20 years of association with the air force as scientific consultant that I had been officially asked for criticism and advice on scientific methodology and its application to the UFO problem." In his letter Sleeper mentioned Hynek's public criticisms of "Project Blue Book for their [sic] lack of scientific evaluations" and asked him to define "those areas of scientific weakness" in a memo to be prepared within the next 30 days.

Hynek prepared an extended commentary. On October 7 he wrote Sleeper, "I address my report to you alone, for as will be apparent, should the present staff of Blue Book read it, any further personal contact with them would prove most embar-



passing to all parties concerned. . . . Since my report is rather long, I have prefaced it with a sequential summary of points covered and of recommendations made." That summary, arguably the finest succinct critique of Blue Book ever written, follows (the italics are Hynek's):

A. It is concluded that neither of the two missions of Blue Book (AFR 80-17), (1) to determine if the UFO is a possible threat to the United States and (2) to use the scientific or technical data gained from a study of UFO reports, are [sic] being adequately executed.

B. The staff of Blue Book, both in numbers and in scientific training, is grossly inadequate to perform tasks assigned under AFR 80-17.

C. Blue Book suffers intramurally in that it is a closed system that has fallen victim to the closed loop type of operation. There has been virtually no scientific dialogue between Blue Book and the outside scientific world. Totally inadequate use is made of the extensive scientific facilities of the air force in executing the Blue Book mission. The superb talents and facilities of AFCRL [Air Force Cambridge Research Laboratories] and of AFOSR, for instance, have rarely been used. The lack of scientific dialogue between members of Blue Book and outside scientists has been appalling.

D. The statistical methods employed by Blue Book are nothing less than a travesty.

E. There has been a lack of attention to significant UFO cases, as judged by this consultant and others, and too much time spent on routine cases that contain few information bits and on peripheral public relations tasks. Concentration could be on two or three potentially scientifically significant cases per month, rather than having Blue Book effort spread thin over 40 to 70 cases per month. Too much attention has been paid to one-witness cases and to cases in which only point-source lights in the sky are seen at night and far too little to the cases of high Strangeness Rating reported by witnesses of conceded reputation.

F. The information input to Blue Book is grossly inadequate. An impossible load is placed on Blue Book by the almost consistent failure of UFO officers at local air bases to transmit adequate information to Blue Book. Many information bits that could have been obtained by conscientious interrogation by the UFO officer are omitted, throwing the burden upon Blue Book to reopen interrogation for additional information, sometimes of the most elementary but necessary sort—e.g., wind directions, angular sizes and speed, details of trajectory, qualifications and nature of witnesses, additional witnesses, etc. The upgrading of original data is the most pressing need within Blue Book.

G. The basic attitude and approach within Blue Book is illogical and unscientific in that a working hypothesis has been adopted which colors and determines the method of investigation. One might put it in the form of a *Theorem*:

*For any given reported UFO case, if taken by itself and without respect and regard to correlations with other UFO cases in this and other countries, it is always possible to adduce a possible even though far-fetched natural explanation, if one operates solely on the hypothesis that all UFO reports, by the very nature of things, must result from purely well known and accepted causes.*

The theorem has a *Corollary*:

*It is impossible for Blue Book to evaluate a UFO report as anything other than a misidentification of a natural object or phenomenon, a hoax, or a hallucination. (In those relatively few cases where even this procedure met with difficulty, the report was evaluated as "Unidentified" but with no indication that the theorem had been outraged.)*

H. Inadequate use has been made of the Project scientific consultant. Only cases that the *project monitor* deems worthwhile are brought to his attention. His scope of operation, including personal direct access to both unclassified and classified files, has been consistently limited and thwarted. He often learns of interesting cases only a month or two after the receipt of the report at Blue Book, and no attempt is made to bring the consultant into the operating loop except in the most peripheral manner.

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Hynek's criticisms had no effect, and events proceeded on their intended course. By June 1, 1968, the Condon Committee was finished with its investigative phase, and the staff began to write and assemble the 1485-page report that would be released as *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects*. On January 8, 1969, a National Academy of Sciences (NAS) panel endorsed the report's conclusions, and the next day the Air Force released the volume to the public. In the introduction Condon wrote that the committee's investigation had determined that further UFO research would be scientifically pointless. Those who went beyond the introduction, however, found that one-third of the cases remained unexplained even after considerable investigation. Few reporters read beyond the introduction, however, and most scientists and most journalists who commented on the report treated it as the end of the UFO issue.

The report had its critics, too, and some of these criticisms were published in the scientific literature. But these voices were heard only by those who were listening for them. Between them the Condon Committee and the Air Force had succeeded in seriously reducing interest in UFOs. Popular fascination with UFOs dropped, along with the membership rolls of NICAP and other private groups. UFOs



would not make headlines again until October 1973, when a great wave exploded in the southeastern United States. Even so, a year earlier, Hynek's *The UFO Experience*, which carried his first detailed open critiques of Blue Book and the Condon Committee, garnered thoughtful reviews in the science journals and in major newspapers, suggesting that the lingering effects of the two-pronged debunking operation were already fading to some extent.

In early March 1969 Maj. David J. Shea, a representative of the Secretary of the Air Force Office of Public Information, attended a meeting at the Pentagon. From the moment it opened, he would recall, "there was no doubt that Project Blue Book was finished." All that remained was the sorting out of details such as where the files should be stored. (They eventually went to the Air Force Archives at Maxwell AFB in Alabama. In Shea's words, "The key was to find a place that was accessible yet not too inviting.")

Air Force Secretary Robert C. Seamans, Jr., announced the closure of Blue Book on December 17. Citing Condon's report, the NAS endorsement, and "past UFO studies," he declared that perpetuation of the project "cannot be justified either on the ground of national security or in the interest of science."

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## PROJECT BLUE BOOK SPECIAL REPORT NO. 14

Project Blue Book Special Report No. 14 (dated May 5, 1955) was released on October 25, 1955. An accompanying press release stated that a "private scientific group under the supervision of the Air Technical Intelligence Center [ATIC] at Dayton, Ohio," had disproved the existence of UFOs. It quoted Secretary of the Air Force Donald A. Quarles: "On the basis of this study we believe that no objects such as those popularly described as flying saucers have overflowed the United States. I feel certain that even the unknown three per cent could have been explained as conventional phenomena or illusions if more complete observational data had been available."

Quarles's remarks would receive the enthusiastic endorsement of mainstream media as eager as the Air Force to discourage continuing popular speculation about extraterrestrial visitation. *Time's* science editor Jonathan N. Leonard hailed the study, whose contents comprised Report No. 14, as "massive, intelligent, painstaking and detailed . . . a cruel blockbuster" for UFO "cultists." As historian David M. Jacobs has written, "by 1956 Special Report 14 had become the cornerstone of the Air Force's position on UFOs . . . that the Air Force had 'scientifically' studied UFOs and found no evidence for their existence as a unique phenomenon."

Background. On December 26 and 27, 1951, Ruppelt, then director of Project Grudge (to be renamed Project Blue Book less than four months later), and Col. S. H. Kirkland of ATIC met with members of the Battelle Memorial Institute, a think tank based in Columbus, Ohio, and asked them to lend their assistance to the Air Force's revitalized UFO investigation. "Besides providing experts in every field of science," Ruppelt would write, "they would make two studies for us[:] a study of how much a person can be expected to see and remember from a UFO sighting, and a statistical study of UFO reports. The end product of the study of the powers of observations of a UFO observer would be an interrogation form." Battelle agreed on January 8, 1952, to take on the project.

Project Stork was the classified codename of an ongoing Battelle study, initiated in the early 1950s, whose mission was to examine the Soviet Union's tech-

nological-warfare capabilities. The UFO study was incorporated into Stork. The study officially started on March 31, under the supervision of William T. Reid. There were five listed requirements: "Provide a panel of consultants. . . . Assist in improving interrogation forms. . . . Analyze existing sighting reports. . . . Subscribe to a clipping service. . . . Apprise the sponsor monthly of all work done."

By early June Stork personnel had drawn up a list of approximately 30 report characteristics to be coded onto IBM cards and prepared a tentative sighters' questionnaire. That summer Stork had to deal with a flood of reports resulting from one of history's major UFO waves, sightings not only of increased quantity but of improved quality as well. As Stork noted in its seventh status report (November 10, 1952), these "reports are now in more detail and often consist of sightings of one object by more than one individual."

Stork was to have completed the analysis by October 1, 1953, but apparently its work continued as late as the spring of 1955. Stork's findings were incorporated into Blue Book's fourteenth status report.

Contents and conclusions. Stork's cases came from military sources or from completed versions of the questionnaire it had developed; a small number were "in the form of direct letters from unquestionably reliable sources." After weeding out some 800 reports that were too poorly documented to be useful, it considered the remaining 3201, the bulk of them from Project Sign, Grudge, and Blue Book files of sightings from June 1, 1952, through December 31, 1952. These were then broken down into nine categories of evaluation: balloon, astronomical, light phenomena, birds, clouds and dust, insufficient information, psychological, unknown, and other.

The first step in the evaluation was to ascertain the essential facts from the reports. The second involved determination of the observer's credibility and the report's self-consistency as well as its general quality. The third step was the categorization or identification of the object.

The initial identification was done by the individual who transcribed the report onto a worksheet. Afterwards a member of the identification panel judged the report without knowing what the other person's conclusions were. If the two arrived at the same identification, it was accepted as the final conclusion—but only if one or the other or both did not call the object an unknown. If they disagreed on a conventional explanation, other panel members analyzed the case. If either or both suggested the object was an unknown, the whole panel studied the case. Bruce Maccabee remarks that "it should be clear that [Stork personnel] took special precautions to assure that UNKNOWNNS really were unknown." The unknowns were defined as "those reports of sightings wherein the description of the object and its maneuvers could not be fitted to the pattern of any known object or phenomenon."

Stork asserted that statistical analysis (including a chi-square technique used to determine whether one thing is truly different from or identical to another) uncovered "no trends, patterns, or correlations"; thus "the probability that any of the UNKNOWNNS considered in this study are 'flying saucers' is concluded to be



extremely small, since the most complete and reliable reports from the present data, when isolated and studied, conclusively failed to reveal even a rough model."

The critics. Only 100 copies of Report No. 14 were printed initially. These were sent to Air Force public information officers, but eventually more copies were made available after California Congressman John E. Moss, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Government Information, pressed the Air Force on the matter. Probably the widest distribution came from the efforts of Leon Davidson, formerly a scientist at Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory and a member of an informal group of scientists and engineers who had studied the epidemic of sightings of green fireballs in New Mexico a few years earlier. In 1956 Davidson printed and sold copies of Report No. 14, together with his analysis and commentary.

Early on Davidson had become convinced that flying saucers were secret devices developed by the U.S. government. In his view Report No. 14 was a clever attempt to hide this fact. Davidson focused the bulk of his analysis, however, on the curious discrepancy between, on one hand, the October 25, 1955, Air Force press release and the report's "Summary" and, on the other, the report's content.

He remarked on the interesting fact that in the Stork study "Unknown sightings constitute 33.3% of all the object sightings for which the reliability of the sighting is considered 'Excellent.'" The chi-square test had shown, as even Report No. 14's authors had to acknowledge, that "there was very little probability that the Unknowns were the same as the Knowns. But they refused to admit that this meant that 'saucers' could be a real type of novel object."

The National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP) disputed Report No. 14's claim that the absence of uniformity in witnesses' descriptions of UFOs made it impossible to construct a model flying saucer. NICAP cited these words from a 1949 Grudge analysis: "The most numerous reports indicate day-time observation of metallic disc-like objects roughly in diameter ten times their thickness." It added, "From this official description a working model of a UFO or a flying saucer can be built without the slightest trouble."

A later critic, Stanton T. Friedman, complained that the Air Force's claim of a mere three percent of unknowns was false; in fact, it

only referred to a small group of 131 sightings looked at under pressure to reduce (by one means or another) the percentage of the Unknowns in the six months preceding the issuance of the press release. . . . [W]hen one examines the quality distribution [one] finds that the better the quality of the sightings the MORE likely they could *not* be identified and the least likely that they were "insufficient information" sightings. . . . [A] careful examination of this document leads one directly to the explanation that some of the objects which were reported were intelligently controlled extraterrestrial vehicles observed by competent observers for an extended period of time under good view-

ing conditions. . . . [T]he conclusions and press releases bear little relationship to the data.

In a subsequent critique, Friedman stated that the unknowns seldom bore any resemblance in either appearance or behavior to the knowns. Typically the former "were described as metallic symetric [sic] discs, or in some cases, much larger cigar shaped objects into and out of which the discs would fly," with extraordinary performance characteristics.

No less than Blue Book's onetime chief scientific consultant, astronomer J. Allen Hynek, disputed Stork's assertion that there was no clear difference between the knowns and the unknowns. Report No. 14's conclusion, he wrote, "completely disregards the results of these [chi-square] tests almost brazenly, as if they did not exist."

The most thorough reevaluation of the report was conducted by Bruce Maccabee, an optical physicist interested in UFOs. Maccabee found that Report No. 14's data indicated that the "best qualified observers make the best reports and are most likely to be reporting true UNKNOWNS, while the poorest observers make the poorest reports (most INSUF. INFO. [insufficient information]) and are the least likely to be reporting true UNKNOWNS." Most of the objects that figured in the unknowns were visible for a longer period of time than most of the known objects—which, according to Maccabee, "contradicts the generally held feeling that most UNKNOWNS result from short term observations."

In trying to dispose of a finding they apparently found intuitively unacceptable, the Stork analysts could only guess that the "psychological make-up" of witnesses in the unknown cases, plus a single unrecognized source (balloon, airplane, "atmospheric distortion," or other conventional stimulus) for many of the sightings, had skewed the results so as to create an artificial distinction between knowns and unknowns. Maccabee dismissed the argument as "weak in view of the pains [the analysts] apparently took to identify all cases."

The analysts then decided that since astronomical explanations figured in the knowns, the unknowns might be the same as the knowns, except that with the former astronomical sightings had been removed. Seeking a match, the analysts deleted the astronomical category from the knowns, then compared them to the unknowns—to little effect. Finally they were reduced to the speculation—which explicitly defied their finding that the unknowns tended to be reports for which the *most* information was available—that unknowns were such because of the "unavailability of supplemental data," even though "insufficient information" was another category entirely.

Maccabee wrote that when Report No. 14's data were analyzed, the claim could be made that the

probability that the characteristics [in color, duration of observation, number, light brightness, shape, and speed] of the UNKNOWNS match



the characteristics of the KNOWNs is comparable to the product of the probabilities of these six tests, a number that is small to say the least: 0.000000000625! Being somewhat more conservative, I think that it would be reasonable to claim that the probability that the distributions all match (i.e., the probability that the UNKNOWNs equal the KNOWNs at least statistically) is much less than 1%.

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## PROJECT GRUDGE

With the initiation of Project Grudge, wrote Edward J. Ruppelt, who would serve as the project's last director and the first of its successor, Project Blue Book, the "Dark Ages" of U.S. Air Force UFO study began. Reports were now "being evaluated on the premise that UFOs couldn't exist. No matter what you see or hear, don't believe it."

Following the rejection by Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg of the Estimate of the Situation, prepared by the pro-extraterrestrial-visitation faction of Project Sign, the project (headquartered at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Dayton, Ohio) was taken over by personnel who were convinced that all reports could be accounted for in conventional terms. Plans for an expanded investigation were cancelled. On February 11, 1949, Sign was renamed Grudge, retaining the older project's 2A security classification.

As part of its effort to "get rid of UFOs," as Ruppelt put it, Grudge cooperated with journalist Sidney Shallett, who in a two-part article in the widely read *Saturday Evening Post* wrote that flying saucers had much more to do with mistakes, hoaxes, and gullibility than with interplanetary visitors. Grudge thought that Shallett's piece would discourage people from reporting UFOs, but when a flood of sightings came to the project a few days after the second installment, personnel were convinced that because Shallett had mentioned, if only in passing, that some sightings remained unexplained, his article had only fed belief in UFOs. A debunking press release a few days later failed to stem rising interest in UFOs—and suspicion of official pronouncements on the subject.

With J. Allen Hynek, an Ohio State University astronomer and UFO skeptic who had been hired as consultant to give a scientist's perspective on sightings, Grudge set out to explain all reports. By August 1949 it had prepared a 600-page report (Technical Report No. 102-AC 49/15-100, classified Secret) that reviewed 244 sightings. It acknowledged that 23 percent remained unexplained, but "there are sufficient psychological explanations for the reports of unidentified flying objects to provide plausible explanations for reports not otherwise explainable. . . . [T]here is no evidence that objects reported upon are the result of an advanced scientific foreign development; and therefore, they constitute no direct threat to the national security." Nonetheless, anticipating a later concern of the CIA-sponsored Robertson panel, Grudge fretted that "public apprehension" about UFOs could be used by enemy forces for psychological-warfare purposes.

The project "recommended that the investigation and study" of UFO reports "be reduced in scope."

Thereafter Grudge "lapsed more and more into a period of almost complete inactivity," according to Ruppelt. On December 27 the Air Force announced it was closing down the project. Grudge's files were put into storage.

In its January 1950 issue *True*, then a hugely popular men's magazine, ran a dramatic article, "Flying Saucers Are Real," by retired Marine Corps major and aviation journalist Donald E. Keyhoe. Keyhoe wrote that "Project Saucer"—the project's public nickname (its classified real name was not generally known)—was only pretending to be skeptical, that in reality it knew UFOs to be extraterrestrial but wanted to keep this unsettling truth secret. The article attracted enormous attention and for years afterwards influenced popular opinion about an official UFO cover-up.



The public pronouncement notwithstanding, Grudge was not quite dead. It retained a marginal existence, enough at least to assist Bob Considine as he researched a UFO-bashing piece that would appear in the January 1951 issue of *Cosmopolitan*. In it Considine, with Grudge's encouragement, lashed out at UFO witnesses, whom he characterized as "screwballs" and "true believers."

By the summer of that year the nearly inert Grudge was down to one investigator, Lt. Jerry Cummings. But the situation changed rapidly in September, following a series of sightings and radar trackings of fast-moving unknowns in the vicinity of an Army Signal Corps radar center in New Jersey (see Fort Monmouth Radar/Visual Case). Ordered to investigate immediately, Cummings and Lt. Col. N. R. Rosengarten, chief of the Air Technical Intelligence Center's (ATIC's) Aircraft and Missiles Branch, spent a day at the site interviewing all participants, then reported personally to Maj. Gen. Charles Cabell, head of Air Force Intelligence, at the Pentagon.

Once there, Cummings and Rosengarten were taken into a meeting already in progress, where they freely voiced their frustrations with the state of Grudge. Cabell, who felt that previous Grudge officers had lied to him, demanded a new, more open-minded approach. Other high-ranking military officers and two representatives of Republic Aircraft at the meeting agreed that changes needed to be instituted. By the time the two officers were ready to return to Wright-Patterson, they had been ordered to reorganize the UFO project.

Cummings's days in the Air Force were numbered, however, and soon he was released from active duty to return to the California Institute of Technology, to resume work on a classified government project. Rosengarten asked Ruppelt, an intelligence officer attached to ATIC at Wright-Patterson, to reorganize Grudge. On October 27 Grudge was officially back in business.

Ruppelt set about filing and cross-referencing all Grudge and Sign reports. He put together a staff consisting of individuals who had no firm opinions about the UFO phenomenon and consequently could judge reports on their merits. ("I had to let three people go for being too pro or too con.") Beginning in December, staff members prepared regular status reports that were issued approximately monthly. Four of these appeared during Grudge's remaining reign; the first three were classified Confidential, the last Secret.

Working with Hynek, the new Grudge staff prepared a standardized questionnaire for UFO reports. Ruppelt and others briefed Air Force officers around the country to let them know that reports would be gladly received and competently investigated.

In an effort to learn about sightings Grudge was not getting, Ruppelt subscribed to a clipping service. He hoped to be able to gain insights into the UFO phenomenon through the compilation of statistics, and he got the Air Force to agree. It contracted with the Battelle Memorial Institute, a Columbus-based think tank, to conduct such an analysis (which would be incorporated into Project Blue Book Special Report No. 14, released in 1955).

By March 1952 the Air Force had upgraded Grudge from a mere "project within a group" to a "separate organization, with the formal title of the Aerial Phenomena Group." That same month Grudge got a new name: Project Blue Book.

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SIGN

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PROJECT SIGN

On September 23, 1947, in the wake of the Kenneth Arnold sighting and other puzzling UFO reports over the summer, Lt. Gen. Nathan F. Twining, head of the Air Materiel Command (AMC), wrote a letter to the office of the commanding general of the Army Air Forces. Twining had been asked to conduct a preliminary review of the issue of "flying discs," and after discussions with engineers under his command, he concluded, and so informed Brig. Gen. George Schulgen, "The phenomenon reported is something real and not visionary or fictitious." The objects were metallic, disc-shaped, soundless in all but a few cases, and remarkably maneuverable. "It is recommended," Twining wrote, "that . . . Headquarters, Army Air Forces issue a directive assigning a priority, security classification and Code Name for a detailed study of this matter." The information gathered would be made available to other branches of the military and to scientific agencies with government connections.

On December 30 the Air Force approved the request and ordered Project Sign to be set up under AMC at Wright Field (now Wright-Patterson Air Force Base) in



Dayton, Ohio. It would carry a 2A restricted classification. (The highest classification was 1A.) Even the name of the project was classified, though its existence was known to the larger public, which called it "Project Saucer."

Sign began its work on January 22, 1948. Most of its investigations were conducted by Air Force intelligence agencies at the base nearest the sighting. If the case was important enough, personnel from AMC headquarters would fly to the site. There witnesses were directed to fill out a standard questionnaire and to answer a list of questions about their sightings. All relevant information and materials went to AMC headquarters to be reviewed and analyzed by evaluation teams, then written up in official reports, copies of which were forwarded to other government agencies and laboratories that might be able to help in identification.

Sign's first major investigation was into the Mantell incident of January 7, 1948, in which Kentucky Air National Guard Capt. Thomas F. Mantell, Jr., died in the crash of his F-51 after pursuing an apparent UFO. Sign's explanation, that the object was Venus, met with much incredulity (an Air Force reinvestigation of the incident in 1952 led to a more credible solution, that the object was a Skyhook balloon), but as Sign investigators gained experience, the quality of their research and analysis improved.

The Soviet Union was an early suspect in the production of the discs, though even proponents of the idea conceded it was unlikely that Russian pilots would test their new aircraft (presumably built from captured German technology) over American territory. In any case, Sign's investigation uncovered no evidence that the Soviets had achieved any aeronautical breakthroughs. That would lead eventually to division in the ranks between those who thought UFOs might be the product of a nonearthly foreign technology and those who believed all reports potentially could be laid to prosaic causes.

From the beginning, however, everyone agreed that whatever the more puzzling reports might or might not indicate, other reports undeniably resulted from simple or complex misidentifications. To help them weed out some of these—those coming from misguided observers who were in fact seeing planets, stars, meteors, and comets—Sign turned to J. Allen Hynek, director of Ohio State University's McMillan Observatory and the closest professional astronomer to Dayton.

At 2:45 a.m. on July 24, 1948, a rocket-shaped object with two rows of square "windows" and flames shooting from its rear streaked past a DC-3 flying 5000 feet over Alabama. It was also observed by a passenger (see Chiles-Whitted Sighting). An hour earlier, subsequent investigation determined, a ground-maintenance crewman at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, saw the same or a similar object. On July 20, moreover, a rocket with two rows of windows was seen moving at great speed over The Hague, Netherlands.

Sign's pro-extraterrestrial faction, including its director, Capt. Robert R. Sneider, was convinced it had the proof it was seeking, and by fall it had prepared

a Top Secret Estimate of the Situation and sent it up the chain of command. At the Pentagon it ignited a fierce controversy. No copy of the document has surfaced, but one Air Force officer who saw it later, Capt. Edward J. Ruppelt, said it recounted the DC-3 encounter and other reports by credible observers and declared that the evidence pointed to interplanetary visitation. When the Estimate got to him, the Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg, rejected it on the grounds that it had not proven its case. In a few months it was declassified and all copies ordered burned, though some are said to have been kept secretly. For years the Air Force would deny that any such report ever existed.

After this the ET faction went out of favor, and those who argued for pro-saic explanations came to dominate the project. Still, a February 1949 Sign report did not reject UFOs outright; it acknowledged it had been unable to explain 20 percent of the cases it had examined. Nonetheless, it went on, "there is the possibility that enough incidents can be solved to eliminate or greatly reduce the mystery associated with these occurrences." When enough cases were solved, the UFO project should be terminated, and any further investigations that might be necessary could be handled routinely "like any other intelligence work."

The Air Force ruled against a Sign proposal to expand its operation by placing UFO teams at every base, and as the ET proponents left the project or were replaced, the anti-UFO faction took uncontested control, and from then on all reports were assumed to be conventionally explainable. On December 16, 1948, Sign even got a new and appropriate name: Project Grudge. What Capt. Ruppelt, who would head a subsequent Air Force UFO project, called the "Dark Ages" had begun.

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## PROJECT STORK.

→ *See* Project Blue Book Special Report No. 14.

## PROJECT TWINKLE.

→ *See* Green Fireballs and Other Southwestern Lights.

## PSYCHIC CONTACTS WITH UFOS.

→ *See* Contactees; Paranormal and Occult Theories about UFOs; and Van Tassel, George W.

## PSYCHOSOCIAL HYPOTHESIS

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The roots of what would become known as the psychosocial hypothesis, which holds that UFO experiences are largely psychological in nature and which by the 1980s would be widely popular in ufology, are to be found in a book by Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), the eminent Swiss psychotherapist and philosopher. First published in Switzerland in 1958 as *Ein Moderner Mythos von Dingen, die am Himmel gesehen werden*, it appeared the following year in English as *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies*. It represents Jung's reflections less on UFOs as such, though they do flit in and out of the text, as on dreams, paintings, visions, and fantastic novels in which more or less UFO-like images are depicted.

In his introduction Jung wrote that there were "symptoms of psychic change" in the air (in the most literal sense) as humanity entered the Aquarian age, a time of transition comparable to the emergence of the Piscean age, which brought with it the rise of Christianity. One symptom of this is reports of flying saucers, an "ostensibly physical phenomenon" that "provokes . . . conscious and unconscious fantasies." Jung believed that the uncertainties of the age, caused by a dominance of rational (conscious) thought over intuitive (unconscious) feeling, were bringing images from deep within the collective unconscious to the surface. The flying saucer, frequently reported as circular in shape, represents an archetype of psychic wholeness, in which both sides of the mind are in balance, and so becomes a focus for fantasies and hopes of a mystical religious nature.

According to Jung, UFOs fulfill humanity's expectations of a redeeming supernatural event. He cautions, however, that this does not explain what UFOs are, only how some people see them. In a short closing chapter, "UFOs Considered in a

Non-Psychological Light,” Jung indicates that psychology cannot explain the UFO phenomenon. He says, “It boils down to this: either psychic projections throw back a radar echo, or else the appearance of real objects affords an opportunity for mythological projections.”

Reflecting on the implications of his statement, Jung remarks that the “notion of a materialized psychism [a psychic phenomenon with physical properties] opens a bottomless void under our feet. . . . [T]his surpasses our comprehension.” He suggests another possibility: that UFOs are spacecraft that have quietly visited the earth for a long time but just now are being noticed because people feel threatened and “unconscious contents have projected themselves on these inexplicable heavenly phenomena and given them a significance they in no way deserve.” Their presences here at a crucial moment in human history “coincide in a meaningful manner,” though they “bear no causal relationship to one another.”

In retrospect Jung’s book seems a sensible and modest statement that unlike much psychosocial speculation to follow does not stray beyond the boundaries of evidence and logic (if, of course, one accepts Jung’s premise that archetypes of the collective unconscious exist in nature and not just as intellectual constructs). *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth* was mostly ignored by ufologists, who saw it as irrelevant to their interests, and misread by journalists, who reported that Jung had dismissed flying saucers as fantasy. Jung made no further public pronouncements on the subject and died unaware of what a later generation would do with his ideas.

Magonians and ultraterrestrials. Though not a Jungian, Jacques Vallee would be the first individual within ufology to lay the groundwork for what would become known as the psychosocial hypothesis. In 1965 and 1966 Vallee had written two books, *Anatomy of a Phenomenon* and *Challenge to Science: The UFO Enigma* (the latter with his wife Janine Vallee), in which he argued a scientific case for extraterrestrial visitation.

But in 1969 he produced an entirely different kind of book, one which, he acknowledged in the preface, had nothing to do with science:

I entirely forgot that I was a scientist by profession when I began the manuscript of *Passport to Magonia*. My only guide has been the persistent feeling that science had offered no answer to some basic needs in our hearts, and that perhaps the present loneliness of man, echoed in the great miseries of times past, had provided most of the emotional power, most of the intellectual quality, mobilized in that unreachable goal: Magonia—a place where gentle folks and graceful fairies dance, and lament the coarse world below.

The term “Magonia” comes from a ninth-century Latin manuscript, *Liber contra insulam vulgi opinionem*, written by Archbishop Agobard of Lyons as an expression of outrage against popular superstitions. The archbishop raged, “We have . . .



heard so much foolishness, so much stupidity and enmity, that [people in the Lyons area] believe and say there is a certain region called Magonia from whence come ships in the clouds." In the nineteenth century, puzzling over ninth and tenth century traditions of cloud ships and their occupants, the folklorist Jacob Grimm suggested that "'Magonia' takes us to some region where Latin was spoken, if we may rely on it referring to Magus, i.e., a magic land." (When the Magonia story is taken in its complex historical and cultural context, according to French scholar Jean-Louis Brodu, any likelihood that this is an early UFO story disappears. The incident was simply an episode in Agobard's vigorous campaign against all non-Christian beliefs. One was the venerable folk belief that scheming wizards caused storms so as to damage the fruits and vegetables grown by local farmers; the wizards then sold the ruined crops to merchant sailors from elsewhere. "Elsewhere" was not even necessarily an otherworldly place. Flat-earth geography allowed for the possibility that ordinary ships could sail through seas of clouds.)

*Passport* did not spring out of nowhere. Though it was the first major book by a ufologist to question the extraterrestrial hypothesis (ETH), England's *Flying Saucer Review* (generally referred to as *FSR*), which under Charles Bowen's editorship had become the leading UFO magazine in the world, was seeking alternative interpretations of UFO reports as early as 1965.

The impetus was the first serious research into the 1896-97 "airship" wave (see *Airship Sightings in the Nineteenth Century*). Some of these reports seemed incompatible with the ETH. This was especially true of the landing stories, where the occupants usually identified themselves as ordinary Americans who had invented marvelous flying machines and who soon would be announcing as much to the world. (In fact, as aviation historian Charles H. Gibbs-Smith observed, "No form of dirigible or heavier-than-air flying machine was flying—or indeed *could* fly—at this time in America.")

In a series of articles in *FSR*, Jerome Clark gave the UFO community its first clear look at what the airship phenomenon was about. In an article in the July/August 1966 issue, Clark, taking note of the Magonia story and assuming it to be relevant to the UFO phenomenon, suggested a reflective quality to UFO appearances, with the objects and their occupants conforming to cultural expectation and "supporting the technology and temperament of the times." If this is so, he speculated, perhaps modern "extraterrestrial" UFOs are not what they appear to be, either.

Not long afterwards John A. Keel, a New York-based writer and admirer of Charles Fort (1874-1932), set out to write what he intended to be the definitive book on UFOs. A generous advance from his publisher allowed him to spend some months in the Ohio River Valley, where unidentified flying objects and other strange phenomena were being reported. Keel talked with persons who claimed bizarre contactee experiences, encounters with menacing and not-quite-human men in black, monsters, poltergeists, and other extraordinary manifestations. Keel even claimed some strange experiences of his own.

From all this he concluded that “ultraterrestrials,” rather than extraterrestrials, were responsible for these manifestations. The ultraterrestrials, incomprehensible demonic intelligences from another reality, are able to create and manipulate matter, and they don various guises (as spacemen, angels, fairies, creatures, and nineteenth-century aeronauts) as they go about their sinister business, which often results in psychological or even physical harm to human beings, whom they hold in contempt. In his writings, including his magnum opus, *UFOs: Operation Trojan Horse* (1970), Keel launched emotional attacks on UFO “buffs” and “cultists” too ignorant, foolish, or frightened to face the truth about ultraterrestrial intrusion.

Even his admirers were sometimes willing to acknowledge, however, that his conclusions outdistanced his evidence by some considerable margin, that his historical, psychological, and social analysis was amateurish, that many of the reports he cited were questionable, that the extreme kinds of experiential claims on which he was fixated were hardly characteristic of the UFO phenomenon as a whole, and that his speculations were laced with paranoia. Yet no one denied that as a teller of scary stories he could be wonderfully entertaining.

More important, by the sheer volume and intensity of his assault on conventional ufological wisdom, he drew the attention of many from the traditional evidence (daylight discs, radar/visual cases, the more credible close encounters) to the phenomenon’s wild and woolly fringes. Soon even a few of ufology’s more thoughtful representatives would at least begin to entertain the idea that Keel might be right after all, that the truth lay out there on the fringes, where, just as Keel had said all along, all sorts of outrageous occurrences *were* being reported. Many who came after Keel would come to conclusions very different from his, but Keel would help them to get there.

It is important to stress that what was happening as Keel and Vallee sought to reshape and redefine the UFO phenomenon had nothing to do with science. Openly anti-intellectual, Keel expressed nearly as much contempt for scientists and other eggheads as he did for the despised ufologists. Vallee, himself something of an intellectual, did not hold his educated colleagues in disdain; he felt merely that the UFO phenomenon could be understood only as a transcendental experience, something science could not comprehend.

In *Passport to Magonia* the groundwork for the psychosocial hypothesis is laid. It would be one of the most influential books ever written on UFOs, but its effect was entirely on ufologists, especially on a younger generation who were not technically trained, who had no desire to believe in a technological UFO phenomenon, and who themselves were being moved by the currents of the counterculture. More than any other ufological writer, Vallee spoke in a 1960s voice, with sentimental melancholy, of a preindustrial, pastoral world in which it was possible to believe in graceful fairies dwelling in green meadows.

Like Jung and all the psychosocial speculators to come, Vallee assumes implicitly that UFO phenomena fulfill some human “need.” Vallee does not further



define that need, except to note the obvious: that human beings, at least some of them, enjoy dreaming and fantasizing. As he outlines his case, he cites anecdotes selected from the pioneering folklore studies of W. Y. Evans-Wentz (*The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries* [1911]) and Thomas Keightley (*The Fairy Mythology* [1878]), who had recorded beliefs about fairies and other supernatural denizens of the earth, and argues that such tales are comparable to modern UFO experiences. But these earlier experiences, because they occurred in a different cultural context, took on a different surface form. Yet underneath these and other otherworldly encounters, such as those reported in religious texts of medieval Europe and in the technological contexts of 1897 airships (which Vallee believes “especially relevant in this connection”) and late-twentieth-century UFO/spacecraft, is the same hidden hand. Vallee believes that the mechanisms that have generated these various beliefs are the same and that the phenomenon has some stable, invariant features. But, he adds, it also has a “chameleonlike character: the shapes of the objects, the appearances of their occupants, their reported statements, vary as a function of the cultural environment into which they are projected.”

According to Vallee, the UFO phenomenon does appear to have a real effect on human culture, and this can be no coincidence. It says something, in his view, about the nature and purpose of the phenomenon, which may occasion a “new mythological movement and . . . give our technological age its Olympus, its fairyland, or its Walhalla. . . . Because many observations of UFO phenomena appear self-consistent and at the same time irreconcilable with scientific knowledge, a logical vacuum has been created that human imagination tries to fill with its own fantasies.” Here Vallee echoes Jung, as he does in this assertion as well: “Such situations have been frequently observed in the past, and they have given us both the highest and the basest forms of religious, poetic, and political activity.”

It is possible, though only with the closest reading, to conclude that Vallee thinks a nonhuman intelligence is behind these varying phenomena. (Vallee would be clearer on this point in later books.) A more casual reading leads to the opposite conclusion, that the phenomena are illusory, the products of cultural and folkloric processes. He offers several conjectures to “explain” the occurrences: “a natural phenomenon whose manifestations border on both the physical and the mental”; “mental entities”; “a superior intelligence . . . projecting various artificial objects whose creation is a pure form of art.” But then he says he “must apologize. . . . I only wanted to show how quickly one could be carried into pure fantasy.” Later he writes that the “search may be futile; the solution may lie forever beyond our grasp. . . . Perhaps what we search for is no more than a dream. . . . We cannot be sure that we study something real.”

Though elegantly written, *Passport to Magonia* is more successful as a literary exercise than as a serious analysis of the UFO phenomenon. Vallee’s reading of folklore is simplistic. The parallels between traditional fairy beliefs and modern UFO encounters are, as folklorist Thomas E. Bullard has written, “oblique and speculative.” In picking and choosing his material carefully, Vallee fails to do justice to

the richness and complexity of fairylore which, when seen in its entirety (as documented by Evans-Wentz and Keightley as well as such modern scholars as Katharine Briggs), intersects with UFO lore rarely and fleetingly.

The most obvious intersection is in the belief that fairies, like UFO occupants, are mostly small in size, though there are no ufological equivalents to brownies, banshees, mine goblins, fairy animals, merfolk, selkies, or any number of the varied entities (and behaviors associated with them) catalogued in, for example, Briggs's *An Encyclopedia of Fairies* (1976). Vallee notes the belief that time is different in fairyland and tries to link this idea with missing-time episodes in the UFO abduction phenomenon. The latter, however, have to do with amnesia (a memory anomaly), not with time supernaturally expanded or compressed.

Furthermore, Vallee's citation of a number of claims subsequently proven to be hoaxes as "real-life" analogues to fairy and folk traditions hardly inspires confidence. Also, owing to Vallee's vagueness concerning key elements of his argument, it is never entirely clear whether he believes encounters with fairies were in some sense actual experiences (or even how that determination could be made when one is relying on literary texts quoting long-dead informants from remote places). At some points he seems to be arguing one way, then another, and then at times intimating that it makes no difference. But of course it does, if one seeks to render a coherent argument, or to draw a distinction between scientific inquiry and literary criticism.

Most damning of all, perhaps, was Vallee's reliance on turn-of-the-century airship accounts, which subsequent investigators would find to be riddled with hoaxes and mistaken observations. Every landing/contact claim about which sufficient information existed to make investigation possible proved a hoax, usually a journalistic invention or a tall tale from the provinces. Most of the fly-over reports turned out to be of astronomical bodies or of balloons launched by pranksters. The remaining reports seem to be of a UFO type still reported occasionally: dirigible-shaped, bearing lights (including searchlights) but not itself luminous.

Emergence of the psychosocial model. The first explicit statement of the psychosocial hypothesis was Jerome Clark and Loren Coleman's *The Unidentified* (1975), which rejected the notion of alien involvement in UFO experiences and employed Jungian analysis to unlock the alleged symbolic meaning of the same sorts of claims on which Vallee drew: religious visions, fairylore, nineteenth-century aeronauts, and modern contactee tales. Clark and Coleman wrote that the "UFO mystery is primarily subjective and its content primarily symbolic," and experiences of it are largely the product of unusual mental states. Its ideas, with elaborations and variations, would form the basis of a large body of UFO literature in the next 15 or 20 years.

Following in the tradition first enunciated by Jung, Clark and Coleman maintain that UFO visions are the psyche's attempt to escape the stranglehold that strict



rationalism has on twentieth-century humanity. The purpose is to restore what is seen as the natural balance between the mind's thinking and feeling aspects.

Speculations like these, which Clark and Coleman later rejected, did not address in any coherent way the evidence associated with some of the most puzzling UFO cases: ground traces, radar/visual trackings, photographs, and other phenomena historically central to any consideration of the UFO question.

Yet, though it was hardly a popular success, the book, like *Passport*, had an impact on ufology. Already the *Merseyside UFO Bulletin*, subsequently renamed *Magonia*, was exploring what its major contributors, such as John Rimmer, Peter Rogerson, and Roger Sandell, saw as the psychological, social, and folkloric dimensions of the UFO phenomenon, and suggesting that UFO experiences had more to do with altered states of consciousness than with alien visitors from elsewhere.

In a 1984 essay Rogerson traced his own intellectual evolution into the new skepticism. He got interested in UFOs, he said, as a schoolboy, read the major books, and joined a local group, composed largely of ignorant and gullible individuals. Then the

Appollo [sic] moonshot . . . destroyed my naive faith in the ETH. The idea of electromagnetic spaceships visiting the Earth seemed somehow absurd. . . . I [took] a serious interest in parapsychology, and I soon realized that serious psychic researchers thought along very different lines from the occult gibberish that circulated in UFO groups. The final synthesis was easy. Ufologists had argued that the UFOs had always been with us, and deeply involved with human culture, and acted like apparitions. I still thought along fairly radical lines, involving collective hallucinations, psi, idea patterns and a collective unconscious possibly able to alter the physical environment. Over the intervening years I have been forced to de-escalate hypotheses as it became clear that a far wider range of cases can be explained in "normal" terms than was once thought possible.

This sounds more like a statement of faith than a logical argument. What American moon-landings have to say, positive or negative, about extraterrestrial UFOs will probably be unclear to everyone but Rogerson. The attraction of the crankish and the credulous to flying-saucer clubs is an undeniable social fact. It does not help us, however, to explain well-documented high-strangeness UFO cases that have puzzled the noncrankish and the nongullible—and that by the early 1980s (when Rogerson was writing) had become notably absent from the writings of the psychosocial pundits. The UFO phenomenon of the psychosociologists' universe consisted almost entirely of bizarre and extreme claims: "entity encounters," as one would call them, involving men in black, monsters, angelic Space Brothers, and other less than evidentially persuasive tales from the fringe.

Evans's entities. The limitations of the psychosocial hypothesis can be seen in the writings of its leading English-language advocate, Hilary Evans, whose books *Visions, Apparitions, Alien Visitors* (1984) and *Gods, Spirits, Cosmic Guardians* (1987) recount a wide range of entity experiences, pronounce them related, and then explain them as psychological manifestations that occur because the percipient "needs" them to happen. The stimulus may even be a need, Evans says, that the individual doesn't know he has—but that Evans is able to detect.

Evans's speculations about "needs" are based, it appears, on a sort of instant analysis of persons he "knows" only because he has read a few sentences or paragraphs about them and their experiences in a book on psychical research, religious visions, or ufology. (Near the conclusion of *Visions*, after reporting on a psychological study of a victim of multiple-personality disorder, Evans laments the lack of "detailed studies of other percipients" so that we could "establish their motivation more clearly," but adds that the "majority of entities . . . *plainly* [emphasis added] reveal in broad terms the role they are playing in a percipient's life." Such speculations, founded as they are on Evans's subjective impressions, have no empirical justification.) Evans's speculations often seem based on a tautology that may be expressed this way: Why did X have an entity experience? Because he had certain psychological needs. How do we know he had these needs? Because he had an entity experience.

Evans is convinced that "belief systems" underlie people's anomalous experiences and that because he himself is part of no belief system he can render objective judgments on these matters. (At one point Evans implicitly includes himself among those persons [such as psychologists and parapsychologists] who work outside a belief system—as if the varied forms of psychology are not themselves "belief systems"—and who can therefore reject the idea that anomalous encounters need an underlying external agent—as if that too, in the absence of conclusive evidence either way, were not itself an expression of a belief system.) He cites the work of behavioral scientist/folklorist David J. Hufford but with little understanding of one of Hufford's major arguments: that psychological deconstructions of anomalous experiences often are at their core as much based in culturally determined, unexamined assumptions (sometimes called faith) as are "believers'" arguments. And at least believers, Hufford notes, often have the benefit of direct experience with the anomaly in question.

In a penetrating essay in a folklore journal, Hufford remarks on the standard skeptical view of supernatural belief—a view that has existed for centuries, probably millennia—namely that supernatural beliefs arise from and are supported by various kinds of obvious error. . . . The research design begins with the question "Why and how do some people manage to believe things which are patently false?" . . . Such a perspective has its usefulness but . . . it is necessarily ethnocentric in the most fundamental sense. It takes a body of knowledge and considers it



to be simply “the way things are” rather than a product of culture. It says over and over again: “What *I* know I *know*, what you know you only *believe*.”

Evans states early in his *Visions* book that it is a “fact” that “we do not have a scrap of evidence for the extraterrestrial origin of UFOs.” If this were true, of course, there would be no controversy about UFO reports. Belief in UFOs as possible spacecraft would be confined in its entirety to crackpots. This is demonstrably not the case. A 1977 poll of members of the American Astronomical Society revealed a surprising degree of open-mindedness on the subject. After a thorough review of the scientific literature on the possibility of life on other worlds, Michael D. Swords of Western Michigan University has shown that ufology’s ETH, whether ultimately correct or not, is an eminently defensible theory from a scientific point of view and, moreover, can reasonably be argued from the body of UFO evidence, including the “entity encounters” that Evans is so certain are imaginary (see *Extraterrestrial Hypothesis and Science*). The real debate is not over whether *any* evidence exists but over whether the evidence that does exist is sufficient to prove the claim.

Having taken an absolutist position, Evans fails to consider in any serious way the possibility that the UFO experiences he reviews are what they appear to be, encounters with a genuine alien intelligence, or to defend meaningfully the principal thesis of his book: that *all* alleged “entity experiences” (as he calls them), whether involving angels, demons, fairies, apparitions, or UFO beings, are subjective in nature. Evans proceeds from the implicit assumption that since such things cannot be, they must be delusions. No doubt some, or perhaps even most, and conceivably all, are; but in his careless lumping together of what may be entirely different questions and separate problems, Evans reminds one of Hufford’s description of a “man who is told that camels at the zoo have humps; he then goes to the zoo and states, ‘I shall define camels, or elephants as they are sometimes called, as any animal found at the zoo, some of which are said to have humps.’”

In contrast to other ufologist-writers who aspire to intellectual seriousness, Evans is oddly indifferent to the truth status of the claims he examines. He writes in *Visions*, “I present these unsupported anecdotes for what they are worth, which is next to nothing as scientific evidence”—a remarkable admission from someone who is using “these unsupported anecdotes” as evidence for a hypothesis he clearly believes to be scientific. In *Gods* he acknowledges, with disarming candor (and italics), that “*every case cited here is dubious*.” Thus, charlatans such as contactee George Adamski, purveyor of questionable photographs and wild tales of interplanetary adventures, and Buck Nelson, remembered chiefly for his marketing of hair from a Venusian dog, are treated as seriously as UFO abductees Barney and Betty Hill, whose sincerity—however one interprets their experience—has never been questioned. Evans remarks that (his italics) “*the concept of ‘genuine’ is meaningless*.”

Even most disbelievers in entity experiences would assume dreams and lies, hallucinations and hoaxes to be different categories of psychological and social phenomena. It is not enough simply to declare, as Evans does, that they are alike because all are products of the human mind and let it go at that. But even if we do let it go at that, granting the proposition that all “subjective” mental experiences are basically alike, what *empirical* evidence is there that imaginary and “real” encounters are basically alike? Evans claims to have that empirical evidence—and it is worth noting, in light of what the next paragraphs tell us about the strength of that “evidence,” that it is the *only* empirical evidence Evans brings to bear on the question.

In 1977 an experiment on the abduction question was conceived and conducted by two California ufologists, Alvin H. Lawson and John DeHerrera, and a physician interested in UFOs, William C. McCall. They wanted to find out if “real” and “imaginary” abduction stories told under hypnosis bore any resemblance to each other. If they did, they thought, this would suggest that the “real” stories are probably fantasy, too. They brought together a small group of student volunteers, quizzed them about their prior UFO knowledge, and selected those who said they knew little about the subject. These students were then put under hypnosis and asked to imagine seeing a UFO, boarding it, observing its interior, encountering its occupants, undergoing a physiological examination, communicating with the beings, exiting the UFO, and experiencing subsequent life changes.

After the completion of the experiment, Lawson would claim that the imaginary accounts were all but identical to the real ones, thus indicating that abductions are internally, not externally, generated. Reporting on these developments, Evans writes (his italics again), “[T]hese experiments establish, beyond question, the ability of hypnotized subjects to replicate, not simply in broad but in intricate detail, scenarios to which they have not had access by any conventional means.” To Evans this means such a feat is possible in any unusual state of consciousness and proves that “*anyone who subconsciously wishes [to have an entity encounter] is able to find within himself the necessary resources.*”

Lawson’s experiment established no such thing, as a number of critics have made clear since then. The first of them, Willy Smith, observed that in more than 70 percent of “real” cases abductees describe humanoids; such beings figure in only 20% (other critics say 10%) of the imaginary cases, where entities never reported in “real” cases are featured prominently. D. Scott Rogo found that the experiment had a “crucially flawed methodology.” Moreover, Lawson’s “evaluations are contaminated by several sources of bias and experimental error,” beginning with the use of leading questions, considered a major blunder in investigations of “real” cases. Another was the employment of McCall—a UFO investigator conversant in the intricacies of the abduction phenomenon—as hypnotist when by “any proper experimental criterion, Lawson should have used a clinician unfamiliar with the UFO literature.” Worst of all, Rogo wrote of Lawson (Rogo’s italics):



*Convinced that the content of his imaginary abduction scenarios matched the content of real-life cases . . . he chose four accounts post-hoc from the literature and pointed out the considerable coincidences between them and imaginary reports. . . . His process of selection was . . . about as scientific as asking subjects to describe an imaginary cat, collecting reports of real cats, extracting whatever common descriptions there might be, and then concluding that all cats are imaginary.*

In 1989, as part of a large-scale comparative analysis of all known abduction narratives, Thomas E. Bullard found

a sharp distinction between real and imaginary cases. [The real ones have a] consistency in content and narrowness of variation [in] contrast with the much greater looseness and diversity of imaginary abductions. Such contrast denies any impression of coherency to the imaginary cases. Real hypnotic and non-hypnotic abduction stories share more in common with each other than with imaginary abduction stories, strengthening the sense that not hypnosis or the hypnotist, not cultural or personal elements can explain the unity behind real reports.

In short, Evans's one claim to experimental confirmation of the psychosocial hypothesis is almost certainly unfounded. Yet while Lawson's hypothesis appears to have been falsified, at least it is falsifiable—unlike Evans's own hypotheses. For example, he proposes that entity-generating psychological states include relaxation and excitation, boredom and ecstasy, isolation and participation in a group, concentration and distraction, questioned faith and unquestioning faith, anxiety and peace of mind. When none of these conditions obtains—if that is conceivable—the weather, the phase of the moon, or the individual's diet may trigger the imaginary encounter. Evans may as well have argued that the psychological state in which one is most likely to have an entity encounter is being alive.

In another instance of base-stretching, he contends that close encounters of the third kind (CE3) accounts could not involve true extraterrestrials because the alleged ETs' behavior is "illogical, no matter how much allowance we make for the possibility ET logic may be different from ours." Scarcely 50 pages of *Gods* later, Evans remarks that such reports cannot be interpreted as alien encounters because the supposed ETs' patterns of behavior are "humanlike in so many . . . ways."

In 1988 Keith Basterfield, an Australian, and Robert E. Bartholomew, an American pursuing graduate studies at an Australian university, proposed a falsifiable version of the psychosocial hypothesis. They suggested that close-encounter claimants are "fantasy-prone personalities" (as defined in a 1983 paper by T. X. Barber and Sheryl C. Wilson) and that psychological testing designed to probe that possibility would confirm as much. Two years earlier, in 1986, Peter Rogerson, the first ufologist to take note of the Barber-Wilson hypothesis, predicted, "All contactees and abductees will be [found to be] fantasy-prone personalities (FPPs). The vast majority of CE3 percipients will be FPPs."

The first experimental test of the FPP hypothesis, conducted in 1989 by University of Connecticut psychologist Kenneth Ring, found no discernible difference between close-encounter percipients and a control group of non-UFO witnesses. Another study, this one of a sample of abductees, found that the subjects "clearly cannot, as a group, be described as having fantasy-prone personalities"; nor were abductees unusually susceptible to hypnosis. Other tests have failed to uncover a link between fantasy-proneness and the conviction that one has had an extraordinary UFO experience.

Limitations of the psychosocial model. The problem with the psychosocial hypothesis is not that the quite real psychological and sociological aspects of the UFO problem are unworthy of attention; it is that the psychosocial hypothesis simply fails to deal with ufology's most interesting questions, the ones that brought it into being in the first place: namely, those related to physical evidence, instrumented observations, and multiply and independently witnessed events.

In place of falsifiable hypotheses, psychosocial speculations substitute a closed system from which it would be all but impossible for a genuinely new and novel phenomenon to emerge. All claims suggestive of other-than-human intelligences—however credible or noncredible, whoever the claimant, whatever the circumstances, whatever the particular details of the story, whatever evidence may or may not exist—become the same thing. Similarities, however slight, matter more than differences, however substantial. In science one must note similarities, of course, but one must also isolate differences. Psychosocial speculators seem to regard differences as irrelevant. They are, in short, employing arguments that flirt dangerously with pseudoscientific logic.

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→ See Crashes and Retrievals of UFOs.

## RB-47 RADAR/ VISUAL CASE

On July 17, 1957, a U.S. Air Force RB-47 underwent an extraordinary experience now considered one of the classic radar/visual UFO sightings.

Equipped with electronic intelligence (ELINT) gear, the aircraft left Forbes Air Force Base, Topeka, Kansas, on a multipurpose mission that included gunnery, navigation, and electronic countermeasure (ECM) exercises. Three of its six-man crew were electronic-warfare officers who ran the ECM equipment.

In the early morning hours, the first two parts of its mission completed, the RB-47 was returning over the Gulf coast near Gulfport, Mississippi, when Frank B. McClure, who was manning the second ELINT station (of three aboard the aircraft), noticed a signal at 3000 megahertz (MHz) frequency at five o'clock relative to the plane's position. McClure initially assumed the signal was coming from a ground-



based search radar, but then it moved upscope, crossed the RB-47's flight path, and descended downscope on the other side. ELINT station #1 was not working the frequency at the time, and station #3 was incapable of operating on that frequency at any time. Though puzzled, McClure said nothing, assuming that there must be some mundane explanation.

Near Meridian, Mississippi, the plane turned west, traveling at 34,500 feet and 500 mph. Soon afterwards, at 4:10 a.m., over east-central Louisiana, Maj. Lewis D. Chase, the pilot, saw an intense blue light at eleven o'clock. He called it to the attention of his copilot, 1st Lt. James H. McCoid, and the two watched the light moving rapidly toward them. They immediately notified the crew that evasive action would have to be taken, but before that happened, the object instantaneously changed direction and streaked in front of them, to disappear at two o'clock.

Remembering the odd signal he had received some minutes earlier, McClure set his equipment to scan the 3000 MHz range and found he was getting a strong signal from the plane's two o'clock position. A check of the #2 monitor on known ground-radar stations indicated it was functioning perfectly, and the signal also appeared on the #1 monitor, run by John J. Provenzano. The possibility that an *unknown* ground-radar station was responsible for the signal was eliminated when the signal moved gradually upscope—not downscope, as it should have if its source were on the ground—even as the RB-47 continued on its westward path at 500 mph.

Now the plane and its crew were in east Texas, within the radar-coverage area of an Air Force radar unit (codenamed "Utah") in Duncanville. The aircraft's occupants were growing ever more uneasy about their enigmatic companion. At 4:39 the pilot saw a "huge" light 5000 feet below him at two o'clock. Though he could not prove it, he had a strong sense that the light was on top of a larger object. A minute later McClure at ELINT #2 reported two signals at 40 and 70 degrees. The first UFO was at the latter location, and now both Chase and McCoid spotted another object at the former site. This second UFO was visible only briefly.

Chase notified Utah and asked for all possible assistance as he left his flight path and headed toward one of the UFOs. It was now 4:42, and ELINT #2 had one signal at 20 degrees' bearing. When Chase accelerated to 550 mph, the UFO pulled away. Seconds later McClure had two signals again at 40 and 70 degrees, and a minute and a half later only one, at 50 degrees. Utah asked Chase to tell it where the UFO was, and when he reported its location (10 miles northwest of Fort Worth), Utah picked it up immediately on its radar scopes. At 4:50 the UFO seemed to stop suddenly, and the RB-47 flew past it. At this moment it disappeared from the scopes, and ELINT #2 lost the signal.

Later, when interviewed by University of Arizona physicist **James E. McDonald**, Chase (in McDonald's paraphrase)

recalled that there was simultaneity between the moment when he began to sense that he was getting closure at approximately the RB-47 speed and the moment when Utah indicated that their target had stopped on their scopes. He said he veered a bit to avoid colliding with the object, not then being sure what its altitude was relative to the RB-47, and then found that he was coming over the top of it as he proceeded to close. At the instant that it blinked out visually and disappeared simultaneously from the #2 monitor and from the radar scopes at site Utah, it was at a depression angle relative to his position of something like 45 degrees.

Chase began a turn over the Mineral Wells, Texas, area, to get back on his original flight path, which would take him north in the direction of Forbes AFB. Suddenly the light reappeared behind them, and the instant it did, Utah and ELINT #2 were documenting its presence. The RB-47 again moved toward the UFO, getting within five nautical miles of it before it dropped to 15,000 feet, blinked out, and again vanished both visually and electronically.

At 4:55, concerned about his fuel situation, Chase notified Utah that he had to get back to Forbes. Two minutes later, at 300 degrees' bearing, McClure picked up a signal, and at 4:58 Chase observed the UFO 20 miles northwest of Fort Worth. The UFO trailed the aircraft, all the while emitting signals picked up by ELINT #2, until object and signal disappeared over Oklahoma City at 5:40. The UFO and the RB-47 had kept company for 800 miles.

**Aftermath.** Both **Project Blue Book** and Air Defense Command intelligence investigated the incident shortly after it occurred, though no account of it appeared in print until the publication, 12 years later, of *Scientific Investigation of Unidentified Flying Objects*, informally and better known as the Condon report. (Physicist Edward U. Condon headed the Air Force-sponsored **University of Colorado UFO Project** [the "Condon Committee"] between 1966 and 1969.) Committee investigator Gordon David Tayer, a physicist and radar expert, declared the case unexplained and later characterized the official Blue Book explanation (that the "UFO" was an airliner) as "literally ridiculous."

Subsequently, McDonald interviewed all six crew members, uncovered official records unavailable to the Condon committee, and corrected some errors in Tayer's version (principally the date, which Tayer had as September 20). Despite a convoluted reinterpretation by debunker Philip J. Klass, who speculated that a complex series of radar errors and the fortuitous appearances, consecutively, of a meteor, the star Vega, and an airliner were responsible for the event, the incident remains as puzzling today as it was in the early morning hours of July 17, 1957.

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## RED BLUFF SIGHTINGS

Until the moment they spotted the object, the evening of August 13, 1960, a Saturday, had been a routine one for California Highway Patrol officers Charles A. Carson and Stanley Scott. At 11:50, as they headed due east on a rural road two miles east of Corning, they had no idea that they were seconds away from an extraordinary encounter that would generate headlines all over the country.

When they first saw it, the object was at 500 feet altitude, slightly to their left, less than a quarter-mile away, and falling at a 45-degree angle from north to south. Certain that they were observing an airliner on its way to a fiery collision with the ground, they jumped out of their patrol car and awaited the inevitable. Because there was no sound, the officers assumed that the aircraft had lost its power and was in free-fall.

It passed over the road. Then, when it got to within 100 or 200 feet of the ground, it did something wholly unexpected: it abruptly reversed direction and shot 500 feet upward before assuming a hovering posture. As Carson would write in his official report, "At this time it was clearly visible to both of us. It was surrounded by a glow making the round or oblong object visible. At each end, on each side of the object, there were definite red lights. At times about five white lights were visible between the red lights." The UFO was metallic-looking, shaped something like a football, and more than 100 feet long. The two officers thought the white lights looked like a row of "windows." They would shortly find that the red lights also functioned as searchlights.

Scott dived for the radio and notified the dispatcher, Deputy Clarence Fry, at the Tehama County Sheriff's Office. Scott asked Fry to alert all cars in the area and to direct some to the scene. He also wanted Fry to check with the Air Force radar station in Red Bluff (about 20 miles to the north) to see if it was picking up anything.

After hovering for a minute or so, the UFO moved to within 150 yards of them. Carson and Scott uneasily reached for their sidearms, .357 Magnum pistols

loaded with armor-piercing bullets, with the intention of drawing them and opening fire if the object got any closer. Instead it turned and swept the area with a brilliant red beam some six feet in diameter. The two red lights on either end functioned as searchlights, but only one operated at a time. Moreover, as Carson would later remark, "the beam wasn't movable in itself. . . . [T]he entire object had to move to move the beam light." Over the course of this aspect of the sighting, one or the other beam flashed six or seven times.

The object was performing fantastic maneuvers, shooting backward and forward in every direction. As all of this was going on, static sounded the radio. Though it would continue as long as the UFO was in sight, it was not sufficient to black out all communication. Exchanges with Fry (who had left the jail to see the UFOs himself) went on intermittently, and at one point Carson and Scott were informed that the Red Bluff radar was tracking the object.

Scott focused the patrol car's own red beam on the UFO. As soon as the light found its target, the object darted away. It started to drift eastward. Assured by dispatcher Fry that other police cars were on their way, Carson and Scott elected to follow the UFO. It stayed to the south of them, at what they estimated to be half a mile to a mile and a half, and kept its erratic movement, sometimes floating slowly, at other times zipping about at speeds "so fast as to be unbelievable." From time to time, because of its generally low altitude, it would vanish from view in the hilly countryside, and the officers, who knew the area well, would take back roads until they found it again. Once, when it went behind a hill and failed to re-emerge, they stopped the car and climbed up on the hood, from which vantage point they had a view over the hill. The UFO hovered there on the other side—but only for a moment. "All at once," Scott reported, "it seemed to jump over the hill." It approached them until a mere 150 feet separated object from observers. It then headed eastward again.

In a letter to Walter N. Webb, Carson recalled:

Most of our time was spent observing the object. However, we made several attempts to follow it, or I should say get closer to it. But the object seemed aware of us and we were more successful remaining motionless and allow it to approach us, which it did on several occasions. . . . There were no clouds or aircraft visible. . . . The object was illuminated by a glow. This glow was emitted by the object, not a reflection of other lights. The object was solid, definately [sic] not transparent. At no time did we hear any type of sound except radio interference.

Eventually, as the object got farther and farther away, Carson and Scott turned around and returned to Highway 99E, which they had crossed some minutes before. Once on it, they drove south to a fire-watching tower. The forester was gone, but the building was open. The officers ran up to the top and looked out toward the UFO, now only a light source hovering near the horizon. Soon, however, it climbed up over



a range of hills three miles to the east and resumed its eastward trek. Before it disappeared from sight for the last time, another light flew in from the south and joined the first. At 2:05 a.m. the objects could no longer be seen.

**Silent lights, flattened circles, and flying wings.** Around midnight Deputy Fry and Deputy Max Montgomery left Red Bluff and drove southeast a few miles down to the tiny town of Los Molinos, where they positioned themselves on a hillside. As Fry would write in an official report:

[A]t approximately 12:30 a.m. . . . [we] observed four objects in the Western sky[;] they were travelling from the south to the north in a straight line and at times they would go straight up or down[;] one of the objects seemed to hover over the Red Bluff area. After a short time there was a [sic] Object seen going from the North to the South.

According to the sheriff's office and to press accounts, several other persons saw the same or similar objects that night, though Sheriff Lyle Williams would not release the names of those who had called or written him. An Associated Press story on August 17 reported a sighting, said to have taken place around midnight in Willow Creek, California, 90 to 100 miles north-northwest of Red Bluff. The witnesses were two girls, seven and 13, who were camping with their parents. At the time of their sighting, the children were in sleeping bags and some distance from their parents, who were talking with friends around a campfire. Their mother, Mrs. John Morse, said, "The description given by the two highway patrolmen is identical to what our children said they saw."

The following evening, at around 10:05, Fry got a radio message from Deputy Montgomery, who was in the Los Molinos area. Montgomery was watching an object that twice had touched down on the ground. Could Fry see it from his position in Red Bluff? Fry stepped outside and saw an object coming in from the west. At a position southeast of him, it stopped and hung motionless for a short time. Fry called to the four trusties inside to come out and take a look. By the time they responded, the object was not in view—but only momentarily. Scanning the sky, a local man who had joined the group saw it in the northwest, and soon everyone was watching a hovering object that, as Fry wrote in his report, "looked like a large Rail Road car with two large Red Lights[,] one on each end." The UFO itself emitted a pale yellow glow. Along its midsection were three or four large rectangular "windows" through which a white light shone.

The object shot off to the south, toward Corning. Moments later it was observed by a Corning police officer, who saw it west of the city and heading south at great speed.

Over the next few days a flood of reports swept north-central and northwestern California. For example, at Vallejo, August 15, at 2:40 a.m., C. L. Shurtleff saw a "great big red thing" at 300- to 500-feet altitude. "I couldn't hear any sound," he said, "so I knew it wasn't a jet plane or anything like that. . . . It was

the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. . . . It moved with incredible speed." At Corning, at mid-evening the next day, four residents saw two cigar-shaped objects with red and white lights. The UFOs maneuvered erratically for 10 minutes, then disappeared in the northeast. Sightings continued at least through the nineteenth.

**Explanations and dissents.** On the morning of August 14, Officers Carson and Scott drove to the Red Bluff Air Station nine miles west of the city. They hoped to discuss the radar tracking of the object they had chased, but the commanding officer of the 859th Radar Squadron said that nothing out of the ordinary had shown up on the scopes—contradicting what Deputy Fry had been told just hours earlier. Openly skeptical, Carson and Scott asked to talk directly with the radar operator but were refused permission. An unpleasant exchange followed, and the officers left.

According to a **Project Blue Book** press release, a representative of the Air Technical Intelligence Center (ATIC), Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Dayton, Ohio, called the base on August 16 to ask whether anything had shown up on radar. He was told no. During a follow-up call the next day, the commander, a Maj. LeRoy, denied having told anyone about a radar tracking.

The Air Force conducted a perfunctory investigation out of McClellan Air Force Base. From his own observation Carson would characterize that investigation as "tongue in cheek." It led to a "solution" at variance both with witness testimony and with astronomical data, leading the **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP) to call it "one of the most strained . . . on record." According to the Air Force:

[T]he sightings which occurred in the Red Bluff area were due to ATMOSPHERIC REFRACTION. It is impossible to determine the exact light source for each specific incident, but the planet Mars was the most probable culprit in the instance of the highway patrolmen. The planet, at the time of the sighting[,] was just below the horizon and probably hove [sic] into view due to the refraction of its light by the atmosphere. A contributing factor to the sightings could have been the layer of smoke which hung over the area in a thin stratiform layer. This smoke came from the forest fires in the area hung in a layer due to the stable conditions associated with the inversion.

In a September 16 letter Lt. Col. Lawrence J. Tacker, the Pentagon's UFO spokesman, added Aldebaran and Betelgeuse to the list of suspects, and on October 6 he declared that "Mars and the star Capella were the most probable answers for these sightings."

Astronomer and NICAP advisor Walter Webb prepared his own analysis:

The official USAF explanation for the Red Bluff sighting was a refraction of the planet Mars and/or the stars Aldebaran and Betelgeuse. At NICAP's request I checked the positions of the planet and the two stars for the date, time, and place of the observation. It was found that all



three objects were *below* the eastern horizon at the start of the sighting, that Mars did not rise above the horizon until about an hour after the sighting began, that Aldebaran did not rise until 1 a.m., and Betelgeuse not until 3 a.m., an hour after the sighting was over. Atmospheric refraction can elevate celestial objects above the horizon but by no more than 35 minutes of arc (a little more than the apparent diameter of the sun or moon). Refraction can also cause a star or planet near the horizon to appear to shift or wobble slightly. However, the Red Bluff object reportedly performed violent maneuvers over a wide area of the eastern sky before disappearing below the eastern horizon (a celestial object in the east would have continued to rise higher in the sky and eventually set in the west). Further, the object described by highway patrolmen Scott and Carson bore no resemblance at all to a refracted star or planet—a very large, oblong object shaped somewhat like a football with a red light on each end and a row of white lights visible at times between the red lights. According to the officers, the object swept the sky and ground six or seven times with a red beam of light. In my opinion the explanation used by the Air Force is completely without basis and ignores the fundamental facts of the observation.

In a separate statement NICAP added:

As for Capella, which was barely above the horizon when the sighting began, no star, by the wildest stretch of the imagination, could give the appearance of a large ellipse a few hundred feet off the ground, nor could it maneuver as described by the police officers. Also, the objects disappeared below the eastern horizon at the end of the sighting, whereas Capella would have risen about 35 degrees in that period.

Though the Air Force and, later, astronomer/debunker **Donald H. Menzel** would assert that all of northern California was awash in temperature inversions on the night of August 13/14, 1960, atmospheric physicist **James E. McDonald** found nothing in meteorological records to substantiate this claim.

Carson, an Air Force veteran and a private pilot, rejected the various proposed explanations, noting that he and Scott were experienced sky viewers “aware of the tricks light can play on the eyes during darkness. . . . Our observations and estimations of speed, size, etc., came from aligning the object with fixed objects on the horizon.” Referring to the Air Force explanation, he remarked, “I’d hate to try to take one of my cases into court with such weak arguments.”

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ROBERTSON  
PANEL

## REEVES CONTACT CLAIM.

→ See Brooksville Incident.

ROBERTSON PANEL

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During the summer of 1952 so many UFO sightings were reported to the U.S. Air Force that, according to the *New York Times* (August 1), "regular intelligence work had been affected." Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg fretted that though UFOs did not exist, nonetheless the subject had sparked "mass hysteria" (*Baltimore Sun*, July 31).

Meanwhile the Battelle Memorial Institute, with which the Air Force had contracted for a scientific study of the reports the official projects had collected, was unready to release its conclusions. It was concerned that before any judgments about UFO data be made, an effort had to be undertaken to obtain information lacking in the great majority of reports. But the Central Intelligence Agency, which was concerned about the uses to which unfriendly powers could put UFO reports (for instance, to cause confusion in the public mind or suspicion of official pronouncements), remained determined to assemble a panel of scientists to deal with the problem. In December 1952 Battelle representatives urged the CIA to postpone its proposed meeting of the next month, but to no avail.

On Wednesday, January 14, 1953, four prominent American scientists, joined two days later by a fifth, physicist Lloyd Berkner, met in Washington along with two associate panel members, missile specialist Frederick C. Durant and



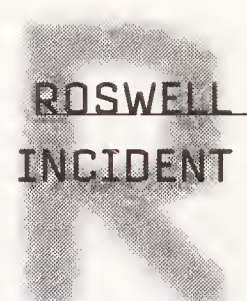
astronomer and **Project Blue Book** consultant **J. Allen Hynek**, and other CIA and Air Force representatives. The scientists were panel head H. P. Robertson, a CIA employee, physicist, and head of the Defense Department's Weapons System Evaluation Group; Samuel A. Goudsmit, a physicist at the Brookhaven National Laboratories; Luis Alvarez, high-energy physicist (and, in 1968, a winner of the Nobel Prize for physics); and Thornton Page, an astrophysicist and deputy director of the Johns Hopkins' Operations Research Office. All had extensive backgrounds in classified government service, and all were skeptical of UFO reports. At least two, Page and Goudsmit, were openly hostile to the subject.

The first day was spent viewing the **Montana film** and the **Utah film**. After that Lt. R. S. Neasham and Harry Woo of the U.S. Navy Photo Interpretation Laboratory reported on their analyses, which led them to believe the objects in the films were unidentified. Capt. **Edward J. Ruppelt** of Blue Book recounted the Air Force's efforts in UFO investigation. The following day Ruppelt completed his presentation, and Hynek discussed the Battelle work. Other Air Force representatives talked of the difficulties of setting up instrument watches to monitor sightings.

The next morning, a Friday, Hynek spoke, and Dewey J. Fournet, who had handled UFO matters for the Pentagon for 15 months, lectured in favor of the **extraterrestrial hypothesis**, and various UFO sightings provided by Blue Book were reviewed. In the afternoon panel members talked about what conclusions they had reached, and Robertson agreed to draft a report to be reviewed the following morning. Saturday was spent revising and putting it into final form. The Robertson panel had spent a total of 12 hours reviewing six years' worth of data.

The scientists agreed that since most sightings could be explained, surely the rest could be accounted for with further investigation, which would be a "great waste of effort . . . unless such action would benefit a training and educational program." Because the "mass receipt of low-grade reports [tends] to overload channels of communication with material quite irrelevant to hostile objects that might some day appear," the Air Force should deemphasize the subject of UFOs and embark on a "debunking" campaign that "would result in reduction in public interest in 'flying saucers' . . . This education could be accomplished by mass media," and scientists, psychologists, amateur astronomers, and celebrities should be brought into the effort to show that even puzzling sightings were potentially explainable. The Air Force UFO project should be expanded slightly and temporarily so that it could educate and debunk effectively. Within a year and a half to two years "public gullibility" would be significantly "lessened" and the "dangers related to 'flying saucers' . . . greatly reduced if not eliminated." Moreover, civilian UFO groups "should be watched because of their potentially great influence on mass thinking. . . . The apparent irresponsibility and the possible use of such groups for subversive purposes should be kept in mind."

The panel formally recommended that "national security agencies take immediate steps to strip the Unidentified Flying Objects of the special status they have been given and the aura of mystery they have unfortunately required."



**The panel in history.** The panel's statements set government UFO policy for years to come, though the panel's very existence was formally classified Secret for at least five years. In 1956, however, Ruppelt produced the first public account of its proceedings. He wrote, "Because of military regulations, the names of the panel members . . . cannot be revealed," nor could the name of the agency they were serving.

In 1958, responding to a letter from the **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena**, the Air Force released three paragraphs of the panel's conclusions and the names of the five scientists who signed the document. A brief reference to the panel appeared two years later in a debunking book by an Air Force UFO spokesman, Lt. Col. Lawrence J. Tacker. In 1966 *Saturday Review* science columnist John Lear received a fuller version of the report.

The Robertson panel has had many critics, and even one of its members, Page, eventually became more open-minded about the UFO phenomenon. Hynek later complained that the

panel's attention was directed largely to a defense and security problem rather than to a scientific one. . . . No mention was made of or explanations offered for the great many "Unidentified" cases already in the Blue Book files. Since the cases had been selected for [panel members] by Blue Book, the prejudicial nature of the "trial of the UFOs" is obvious. . . . The Robertson panel . . . made the subject of UFOs scientifically unrespectable, and for nearly 20 years not enough attention was paid to the subject to acquire the kind of data needed even to decide the nature of the UFO phenomenon.

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## ROSWELL INCIDENT.

→ See Crashes and Retrievals of UFOs.



RUPPELT, EDWARD J.  
(1923-1960)

Born in 1923, Edward J. Ruppelt attended grade school and high school in Iowa, and in 1942 he was drafted into the Army Air Force. He flew submarine patrol off the Atlantic coast and was graduated from radar school to become one of the early airborne radar operators. During the war he was given five battle stars, two theater combat ribbons, three air medals, and two Distinguished Flying Crosses. After being released into the Army reserves in 1945, he entered Iowa State College, earning a degree in aeronautical engineering in 1951. Not long afterwards he was recalled to active duty and assigned to the Air Technical Intelligence Center (ATIC) at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. There he worked on classified technical projects.

On September 10 and 11, 1951, a series of dramatic visual sightings and radar trackings of fast-moving UFOs at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey (see **Fort Monmouth Radar/Visual Case**), brought to a boil simmering concerns among top service personnel about the militantly skeptical stance of **Project Grudge**, the Air Force's official UFO-investigating body. The Army Signal Corps radar center at Fort Monmouth teletyped a detailed report of the incident both to Wright-Patterson and to Air Force headquarters in Washington, and almost immediately Maj. Gen. Charles Cabell ordered an investigation by ATIC, which sent two lieutenants (one of them Grudge head Jerry Cummings) to the scene. Over two days the officers interviewed all the witnesses and radar operators, then flew to Washington for a morning meeting at the Pentagon. Those who grilled the officers made no secret of their impatience with the "hoax, hallucination, and misidentification" approach Grudge had taken. Cabell ordered a new UFO project.

Before the month was over, Lt. Col. N. R. Rosengarten, chief of the Aircraft and Missiles Branch of ATIC, had asked Ruppelt to head the project. Ruppelt remained with it for two years, leaving it (and the Air Force) in September 1953. He immediately busied himself with efforts to speed up reporting procedures, to brief Air Force officers on the dimensions of the UFO problem, to develop a standardized questionnaire for witnesses, and to obtain a statistical study of UFO characteristics. He was hampered by inadequate funding, but in early 1952 Grudge was given the new code name **Project Blue Book** and was upgraded in importance. Because of the competence he had already demonstrated, the relatively low-ranking Ruppelt (now a captain) was allowed to remain in charge, though under normal circumstances new leadership would have been brought in and the project given to an officer with at least the rank of colonel.

During Ruppelt's reign Blue Book dealt with some of the most celebrated cases in UFO history, including the **Washington National radar/visual case** and the **Lubbock lights**. Ruppelt and his staff analyzed more than 4500 sightings, find-

ing conventional solutions for most but acknowledging one-fourth remained puzzling even after extensive study. Most observers of Blue Book agree that the Ruppelt years comprised the project's golden age, when the investigations were most capably directed and conducted. Ruppelt himself was open-minded about UFOs, and his investigators were not known, as Grudge's were, for force-fitting explanations on cases.

In January 1956 Ruppelt published an account, part memoir, part history, of the Air Force's UFO projects, *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*, still considered a seminal work in the UFO literature. Until the Blue Book files were opened many years later, it was the only authoritative inside account of the Air Force handling of the UFO phenomenon. It was full of startling revelations, such as that in the summer of 1948, in the wake of the **Chiles-Whitted sighting**, investigators from **Project Sign**, the first Air Force UFO project, concluded that the "flying discs" were interplanetary and sent a Top Secret "**Estimate of the Situation**" so stating up the chain of command. "It got to the late General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, then Chief of Staff," Ruppelt wrote, "before it was batted back down." Some months later the estimate was declassified and burned. After first denying it, the Air Force eventually acknowledged that such a document had existed.

Besides recounting many heretofore-unpublished UFO sightings by military and government personnel, Ruppelt exposed gross incompetence, especially during the Grudge period (which he characterized as the "Dark Ages"), and behind-the-scenes factional fighting within the Air Force over how to deal with UFO reports. Though outspokenly critical of **Donald E. Keyhoe** and other civilian ufologists who were accusing the Air Force of covering up UFO secrets, Ruppelt wrote that the best cases were indeed baffling.

When Keyhoe became director of the **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP) in 1957, he asked Ruppelt to serve as a special adviser, but the former Blue Book head, citing health problems (a recent heart attack) and work load, declined. In November of that year, following the widely publicized **Levelland sightings**, Ruppelt told Keyhoe that the UFO evidence warranted continued Blue Book interest and that the Air Force had cases involving electromagnetic effects and radiation.

But by the following year Ruppelt's attitude had begun to shift. In May he wrote an inquirer: "I have visited Project Blue Book since 1953 and am now convinced that the reports of UFOs are nothing more than reports of balloons, aircraft, astronomical phenomena, etc. I don't believe they are anything from outer space." Shown the statement, Keyhoe could only conclude that Ruppelt "is under pressure directly or indirectly. He works for an aircraft corporation which has contracts with the Air Force, and while they might not order him to reverse his opinion, obviously they could make their desires known so that he would feel obliged to take this step."

In May 1959 Ruppelt informed Keyhoe that he was adding new material to the book, with Air Force cooperation. Soon word was out that Ruppelt had accept-

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ed the Blue Book anti-UFO line and would be, as Keyhoe charged, "debunking his own UFO book." In 1960 a new edition of *Report* appeared with three added chapters. Characterizing UFOs as a "Space Age Myth," Ruppelt approvingly cited Air Force dismissals of recent cases, played up wild **contactee** stories, and wrote condescendingly of Keyhoe and NICAP.

He died in the fall of 1960, the victim of a second heart attack, in Long Beach, California. Ever since then, rumors have circulated that he was pressured to recant his earlier more-or-less pro-UFO sympathies. Something like this may have occurred, but in the absence of evidence to this effect, it can only be a speculative explanation. In the more prosaic version offered interviewers by Ruppelt's widow, his continuing association with Blue Book personnel, plus exposure to the contactee movement of southern California, soured him on the UFO phenomenon.

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## SALT LAKE CITY SIGHTING

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A classic sighting of a **daylight disc** took place on October 2, 1961, at Salt Lake City, Utah. The object was observed from both ground and air. Waldo J. Harris, a private pilot and real-estate broker, provided this account:

About noon . . . I was preparing to take off in a Mooney mark 20A from the North-South runway at Utah Central Airport when I noticed a bright spot in the sky over the Southern end of the Salt Lake Valley. I began my take-off run without paying much attention to the bright spot as I assumed that it was some aircraft reflecting the sun as it turned. After I was airborne and trimmed [sic] for my climb-out I noticed that the bright spot was still about in the same position as before. I still thought it must be the sun reflecting from an airplane, so I made my turn onto my cross-wind leg of the traffic pattern, and was about to turn down-wind when I noticed that the spot was in the same spot still. I turned out of the pattern and proceeded toward the spot to get a better look.

As I drew nearer I could see that the object had no wings nor [sic] tail nor [sic] any other exterior control surfaces protruding from what appeared to be the fusilage [sic]. It seemed to be hovering with a lit-



tle rocking motion. As it rocked up away from me I could see that it was a disc shaped object. I would guess the diameter at about 50 to 55 feet, the thickness in the middle at about 8 to 10 feet. It had the appearance of sand-blasted aluminum. I could see no windows or doors or any other openings, nor could I see any landing gear doors, etc., protruding nor [sic] showing.

I believe at the closest point I was about 2 miles from the object at the same altitude, or a little above, the object. It rose abruptly about 1,000 ft above me as I closed in giving me an excellent view of the underneath side, which was exactly like the upper side as far as I could tell. Then it went off on a course of about 170 degrees for about 10 miles where it again hovered with that little rocking motion.

I again approached the object but not so closely this time when it departed on a course of about 245 degrees climbing at about 18 to 20 degrees above the horizon. It went completely out of sight in about 2 or 3 seconds. . . . I can keep our fastest jets in sight for several minutes, so you can see that this object was moving rather rapidly.

All of the time I was observing the object, after getting visual confirmation from the ground, I was describing what I had seen on radio uni-com frequency. I was answering questions from the ground both from Utah Central, and Provo. The voice at Provo said that they could not see the object, but at least 8 or 10 people did see it from the ground at Utah Central Airport. . . .

I was returning to the field after it had departed when I was asked over radio if I still could see the object, and I reported that I could not. They said they had it in sight again. I turned back and saw it at much greater distance only for about a second or two when it completely vanished. The guys on the ground said it went straight up as it finally left, but I didn't see that departure.

Seven persons at the airport, including operator Jay Galbraith, also saw the object, in the southern sky off in the direction of Provo, 23 miles away. Elsewhere in Salt Lake City at least six other individuals observed the UFO, which one described as a "round, silvery object that flew from west to east, and was too high and too fast for a helicopter, and which had a red light that went off and on." One airport witness, Virgil S. Redmond, had just landed when the UFO showed up. He and the others passed around field glasses and watched the object for some 15 minutes. "Whatever it was seemed to be rocking while hovering almost stationary just south of the field," he said. "At times, as it turned, it looked like a zeppelin." An F-100 aircraft passing through the area was alerted to the sighting, but its crew saw nothing.

Minutes after the sighting, the Salt Lake City Utah National Guard Control Tower notified the Flight Operations Division of Hill Air Force Base. Representatives of the base's Security and Law Enforcement Division immediately went to the airport to interview the observers. Airport attendant Russell M. Woods told them that in his estimation the object had been at 2500 feet altitude. Clyde Card reported that it was oval-shaped when the sun was shining on it; when it turned and the light was no longer shining on it directly, it would be lost to view to those who were not watching it with optical assistance. At those moments those viewing through binoculars would see the object as dark and cigar-shaped. The sunlight reflected off what looked like aluminum, and the object's edges were clear. The other witnesses described essentially the same thing, though one thought it was at least 3000 to 5000 feet up.

Harris, who had the closest look, estimated its size at between 35 and 50 feet and about four feet thick, possibly a bit thicker in the center. (A few months later, in the account quoted earlier, he would expand his estimate of the object's dimensions.) It was traveling "in the thousands of miles per hour" when it disappeared.

A check with the U.S. Weather Bureau confirmed what all the witnesses had said about atmospheric conditions: there was no cloud cover. The ceiling was clear, and visibility extended to 40 miles. The Hill report noted:

Two balloon releases were reported from the Salt Lake Airport at 1700Z with the winds at 2 knots from the SE, and at 2300Z with 5 knot winds from NW. Prevailing winds at release time would not have carried the balloons into the area of the sighting. Salt Lake Air Traffic Control Center reported no air traffic in this area in a direction which would account for the sighting.

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**Solutions.** On October 9 Douglas M. Crouch of Hill's Security and Law Enforcement Division forwarded the official report, including transcripts of the interviews with the witnesses, to **Project Blue Book** at Wright-Patterson AFB's Foreign Technology Division. In his summary of the investigation, Crouch wrote, "No unusual meteorological or astronomical conditions were present which might account for the sighting. . . . As of the date of report it is believed that all logical leads have been exhausted in an effort to identify the object."

Even so, two days later unnamed "Air Force officers in the Pentagon" were telling reporters that Harris and the other witnesses had seen either the planet Venus or a research balloon. When informed of the Air Force claim, Harris responded with incredulity: "If the Pentagon thinks I have eyes good enough to see Venus at high noon, they are really off the beam. The object I saw was saucer shaped, had a gray color, and moved under intelligent control. I got within three miles of it, and that is a lot closer than Venus is. I have seen a lot of balloons too, and this was no balloon. . . . Balloons move with the winds and air currents. This thing flew directly against a 10 mile per hour wind and at terrific speed."



Aside from its surface implausibility, the Venus explanation was physically impossible. At one point Harris had the object in a sight line in front of distant mountains. That alone would have eliminated Venus. Moreover, the mountains were off to the south-southeast; Venus was in the southwest and would have been visible only to someone making a diligent search of the proper area of the sky.

In any event, the Venus identification was quickly dropped. On November 9 Maj. William T. Coleman, Jr., head of Blue Book, informed an inquirer, "The Air Force has not reached a conclusion on this case pending receipt of information from several firms carrying on upper air research in that area of the United States. When this information is received we will then attempt an evaluation of the sighting."

Apparently nothing came of this effort to link the sighting to high-altitude weather balloons. Soon Blue Book settled on its official explanation. In the words of its final summary of the case:

Sun at time and date of this sighting was in a direction coincident with that reported for UFO. UFO was reported to be at elevation of approx 22 degrees above horizon while absolute elev[ation] of sun f[ro]m Salt Lak[e] area was 46 degrees 59' 42" at time of sighting. This would put obj[ec]t at approx 24 degrees below sun. It is noted that weather conditions at time of sighting indicate high cirrus clouds. Cirrus clouds are associated with ice crystals. Sun dogs, which are associated with ice crystals form at 22 1/2 degrees and sometimes 45 degrees f[ro]m sun. All indications in this case are directed toward obj[ec]t being a sun dog. It is significant that witnesses on ground observed obj[ec]t to be stationary while airborne witnesses indicate motion—probably his own. There is no available evidence which would indicate the obj[ec]t of sighting was not a sun dog.

In fact, some ground witnesses—apparently those who had the object (only intermittently visible to those without binoculars) in more or less continuous view—explicitly reported movement. Jay Galbraith, who watched it uninterrupted for some 15 minutes, saw it ascend some 5000 feet. The Hill AFB report paraphrases his testimony on this point:

[The object] was climbing and changing altitude. It seemed to go to the east for some time and hover in one position, then the last he remembered it was going west, climbing. . . . Some of the maneuvers were at rapid speed, and some were slow. At one time it climbed quite fast, with abrupt changes of direction.

In the course of his five-minute observation, witness Robert Butler, according to the Hill report, observed a

flight path of straight up and also to the west. Flight upward was at a rapid speed, the flight to the west . . . fairly slow.

Duane Sinclair recalled:

I saw it in one position low on the horizon, and the second time it was to the right and higher, maybe eight to 10 thousand feet variation. It was approximately five minutes between the two sightings.

Furthermore, as already noted, weather records indicated no cloud cover. Aside from the consideration that the reported object bore no resemblance to sun dogs (also known as mock suns and parhelia), the “high cirrus clouds” in the Blue Book summary appear to be an Air Force invention.

A subsequent book by two UFO debunkers, **Donald H. Menzel** and Lyle G. Boyd, who endorsed the sun-dog theory as the conclusive solution to the sighting, reiterates Blue Book’s false claim that no one besides Harris saw the object move.

The Air Force never informed Harris that it had “identified” the UFO as a sun dog. Harris learned of it in October 1966 after **James E. McDonald**, a University of Arizona atmospheric physicist, asked him if he knew what a sun dog is. Harris said he did, adding (correctly) that sun dogs are fairly good-sized, whereas the object he and the others had seen was small. McDonald noted as well that no sun dog could have been projected against the distant mountains, as Harris reported the UFO had been.

McDonald further observed, “The altitude of the noon sun at Salt Lake City that day was about 40 degrees, and sun dogs, if there had been any, would have occurred to right and left at essentially the same angular altitude, far above the position in the sky where Harris and others saw the object hovering.”

The Salt Lake City sighting remains a puzzle.

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→ See Crashes and Retrievals of UFOs.

## SCHIRMER ABDUCTION CASE

Police Sgt. Herbert Schirmer, 22, first sensed something unusual when cattle in the Ashland, Nebraska, sales barn panicked and kicked at their stalls for no apparent reason. Twice, at 1 a.m. and again at 1:35, he had gone to check on them, listening uneasily all the while to the howling of dogs. It was December 3, 1967, and Schirmer was minutes away from a decidedly strange experience.

At 2 as he was moving southwest on Highway 6, checking various facilities and business establishments along the road, he noticed red lights to his right, along Highway 63. He passed the intersection and turned around, intending to check on what he assumed to be a stopped truck. It was now 2:30. He drove a short distance up 63 and stopped, his headlights shining on the object, which turned out to be no truck. The red lights were blinking through the windows of a disc-shaped structure hovering at a slight tilt 150 feet away and six to eight feet above the road. Schirmer could discern a catwalk around the object, which looked as if it were made of shiny, polished aluminum. It then ascended slowly with a sort of siren sound, and it emitted a flamelike substance from the bottom. His head sticking out the window, Schirmer watched it pass nearly overhead, then shoot up and out of sight.

He got out of the car and executed a quick inspection of the road surface with a flashlight. Then he drove back to the police station and wrote in the log book, "Saw a flying saucer at the junction of highways 6 and 63. Believe it or not!" He was puzzled to see it was 3 a.m., though in his conscious memory he could account for no more than 10 minutes. Before the night was over, he began to feel sick and nervous. "I had a headache," he recalled, "and there was a weird buzzing noise in my head. I'd start to doze off, and the noise seemed to get louder. I also had a red welt on the nerve cord that runs down below the ear. The welt was about two inches long, maybe a half-inch wide."

On February 13, 1968, University of Wyoming psychologist R. Leo Sprinkle, Schirmer, and Police Chief Bill Wlaskin met in Boulder with **University of Colorado UFO Project** investigators. Dr. Sprinkle was to put Schirmer under hypnosis. In this state Schirmer related that a "white, blurred object" had come out of the UFO and communicated mentally with him, after the power in his car had failed and the police radio had gone dead. In some fashion he had been prevented from pulling his revolver from its holster. He could not or would not recall the substance of the exchange; "this is not the right time nor place," he explained.

Once out of hypnosis, Schirmer volunteered further details. According to Sprinkle's summary:

[T]he white, blurred object seemed to be a living object, although he didn't remember anything about the object until the hypnotic session; communication with someone in the craft occurred at the time of the UFO sighting and the feeling of direct mental contact with someone was occurring at the time of the interview; information was obtained . . . which indicated that the craft was propelled by some type of electrical and magnetic force which could control the force of gravity; the craft was obtaining a power supply from nearby power lines in order to assist in communications; someone or something told Sgt. Schirmer that he was "doing a good job," that he should not talk further during the interview, but he could talk later this year and tell more about the events of the UFO sighting. Information given to Sgt. Schirmer indicated the following: the craft belonged to a "sister ship" which was like an aircraft carrier; the occupants of the craft were based on Venus or Saturn but were from another galaxy; the intentions of these beings were friendly, and their purpose was to prevent earth people from destroying the earth.

Project officers dismissed the story as delusional. Only Sprinkle, as an outside consultant with a longstanding interest in UFOs, felt otherwise.

After the Boulder meeting Schirmer's life continued its descent into stress and fear. Though he was appointed Ashland police chief on Wlaskin's resignation, he kept the job for only two months. "I resigned because I wasn't paying attention to my job," he said. "I kept wondering about what happened that night." Determined to solve the mystery, he got in contact with Iowa writer Warren Smith. Smith in turn brought hypnotist and paranormal researcher Loring G. Williams into the case.

**"You will not speak wisely."** On June 8, 1968, Schirmer, Smith, and Williams met in Des Moines. Schirmer was regressed back to the early morning hours of December 3. A considerably more detailed narrative of the events emerged.

In this new version, as the car's electrical power failed, the UFO landed in the field near the highway. Beings came out of the object and approached his car. One of the figures, standing in front of the car, sprayed a substance "like a greenish gas" all over the vehicle. Then the same figure drew something out of a holster and pointed it at Schirmer. There was a brilliant flash, and the officer was instantly paralyzed. A moment later he passed out.

The period of unconsciousness apparently was brief. Schirmer next found himself rolling down the window on the driver's side. One of the figures grabbed the left side of his neck, just below the ear, from behind. The pain was intense. Schirmer next opened the door and stood beside the car as a being, apparently the



one who had pointed the gunlike device at him, stared into his eyes and asked, "Are you the watchman over this place?"

The beings were humanoids, between 4 1/2 and five feet tall. Their heads were long and thin, with gray-white skin, and their slanted "catlike" eyes did not blink. They had flat noses and slitlike mouths. They wore silver-gray helmets, each with a small antenna on the left side in the ear area. Their uniforms and gloves were of the same color. At the left breast of each suit was the emblem of a winged serpent.

The first being, whom Schirmer understood to be the crew leader, pointed to a nearby power plant and asked, "Is this the only source of power you have?" He also wanted to know about a water reservoir not far away. Wondering if he was dreaming, Schirmer asked if the being was real. In response the alien squeezed the officer's shoulder. Would Schirmer shoot at a spaceship? "No, sir," Schirmer assured him. The leader then said he could come aboard the craft.

They walked over to the underside of the ship. A circle opened up just above them, and a metal ladder dropped out. The metal was cold, and so, Schirmer learned, was the craft's interior.

They entered a room that Schirmer estimated to be 26 feet by 20 feet. The lighting, which came from strips in the ceiling, was red. Above a control panel he saw a large "vision screen." Two triangle-back chairs were positioned in front of the panel. The leader explained that this was an "observation craft with a crew of four men." Schirmer had the curious sense that communication was occurring on both the mental and physical levels. The latter, which came through their antennas, sounded strange, like a broken English spoken "from deep inside him rather than from his mouth," Schirmer said.

The leader gave Schirmer a tour of the ship, showing him "things that look like computer machines," which seemed to put things in his mind. The leader said he was from a "nearby galaxy" and his people had bases on earth, Venus, and other planets elsewhere in our galaxy. The earthly bases were off the coasts of Argentina and Florida and in an unspecified polar region. Earthly radar had knocked some ships out of the air, but before they hit the ground, "the mother ship destroys them by a built-in mechanism that blows them up and burns them up." The "mother ships" were enormous "interplanetary stations," located far out in space; from them the smaller craft were dispatched to bases on earth. Using "light beams," both the large and small craft could see through walls and into any building. They also monitored earthly communication systems.

The leader showed Schirmer a disc six feet in diameter. It was a remote-control device, he explained, and transmitted sound and sight to the observation ship's vision screen. Flicking a switch, the being turned on the screen, then pressed a button. The screen was filled with an image of two humanoids outside the ship, walking in stiff, military fashion as if they were on guard duty. When another button

was pressed, three UFOs of varying shapes were shown flying against a starry background. These were “war ships,” the leader said. Another pressed button brought one of the mother ships into focus. The object was long and cigar-shaped.

Concerning the propulsion system, Schirmer had this to say:

The ship is operated through reversible electro-magnetism. . . . A crystal-like rotor in the center of the ship is linked to two large columns. . . . He said these were the reactors. . . . Reversing magnetic and electrical energy allows them to control matter and overcome the forces of gravity.

The craft drew electricity from power lines, the leader said. He gave Schirmer a demonstration. An antennalike device on the ship pointed toward a power line on the ground. A “sudden white spurt of electricity . . . shot out of the electrical line and went right into the tip of the antenna. . . . He said that they didn’t take much electricity, but they have a problem storing it so they take it from our power lines. Later, he put the electricity back in the power line. . . .” Schirmer was also told that the extraterrestrials drew power from water.

They had been watching the earth for a long time and planned to contact more people. The pattern of contacts would be random so that earthly governments could not discern patterns in these or other activities. “To a certain extent they want to puzzle people,” Schirmer said. They wanted to reveal themselves only gradually after human beings were used to the idea and would not be afraid of them when they showed themselves openly. Their intentions were friendly.

Gazing directly into Schirmer’s eyes, the leader said, “I wish you would not tell that you have been aboard this ship. You are to tell that the ship landed below in the intersection of the highways, that you approached, and it shot up into the air and disappeared. You will tell this and nothing more. You will not speak wisely about this night. We will return to see you two more times.”

He placed his hand on the police officer’s shoulder and spoke a word Schirmer did not recognize. He directed him to the hatch. The two “guards” climbed inside, and Schirmer returned to his car. He watched the UFO ascend and vanish. He remembered nothing.

Schirmer’s story has much in common with other abduction reports recorded since then. The only significant missing feature is the physical examination. In 1967 the **abduction phenomenon** was not unknown—*The Interrupted Journey*, John G. Fuller’s best-selling book on the **Hill abduction case**, had been published the previous year—but such episodes were rare, and only the Hills’s experience was known outside the small community of UFO enthusiasts. In short, hoaxers or dreamers had little on which to draw, consciously or unconsciously, should they conjure up visions of extraterrestrial kidnappings. Today, hundreds of far more outlandish tales later, a report like Schirmer’s would attract only modest attention, however remarkable it seemed at the time.



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## SCHMIDT CONTACT CLAIMS.

→ See Hoaxes.

## SCIENTISTS AND UFOS.

→ See American Association for the Advancement of Science UFO Symposium; Extraterrestrial Hypothesis and Science; Green Fireballs and Other Southwestern Lights; Hynek, Josef Allen; McDonald, James Edward; Menzel, Donald Howard; Project Blue Book; Robertson Panel; Tombaugh Sighting; and University of Colorado UFO Project.

## SCORITON HOAX.

→ See Mantell Incident and Hoaxes.

## SCULLY HOAX.

→ See Crashes and Retrievals of UFOs.

## SENATOR RUSSELL SIGHTING

SENATOR  
RUSSELL  
SIGHTING

Until April 30, 1959, the matter was Top Secret. After that, until 1985, it was Secret. But when word of it—a UFO sighting in the Soviet Union by Sen. Richard Russell, Democrat of Georgia and head of the powerful Senate Armed Services Committee—leaked out in late 1955 or early 1956 to *Los Angeles Examiner* aviation reporter Tom Towers, Towers tried without success to secure the details. After hearing the story from a Pentagon source, Towers wrote Russell, got no response, and later tried again. On January 17, 1956, Russell replied, “I have discussed this matter with the affected agencies of the Government and they are of the opinion that it is not wise to publicize this matter at this time.”

In March 1985, in response to a Freedom of Information Act request, Air Intelligence Report No. IR-193-55 was declassified and released. Nine pages long, the report was written on October 14, 1955, by Lt. Col. Thomas S. Ryan, U.S. air attaché at the American embassy in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Ryan wrote that on the twelfth, at 9:45 p.m., Sen. Russell, Armed Services Committee consultant Ruben Efron, and Lt. Col. E. U. Hathaway arrived on the train from Kiev, U.S.S.R., and were immediately escorted to the embassy. Once there, Hathaway remarked that the group had something extremely important to report—“something that you may not believe, but something that we’ve been told by your people [U.S. Air Force] doesn’t exist.”

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Ryan warned Hathaway that it would be better to discuss the matter in more secure quarters in the morning. At 9 a.m. Hathaway and Efron met with Ryan and U.S. Army attaché Col. Thomas Dooley in Dooley’s office. Russell, who was busy with the American ambassador, did not attend the meeting.

Hathaway and Efron said that just after 7 p.m. on October 4, as they were on a Soviet train passing through the Trans Caucasian region, Russell was startled to see, to the south of the train, a disc-shaped object that ascended vertically at a slow rate of speed. Its outer surface revolved slowly to the right, and a spark or flame emanated from the bottom. When the UFO got to an altitude of 6000 feet, it headed north, its speed accelerating quickly, and flew over the tracks in front of the train.

Russell rushed over to inform his two companions. Hathaway looked quickly enough to see the UFO, but Efron missed it. But then a second disc appeared to perform exactly the same maneuver as the first. The witnesses estimated that no more than a minute passed between the two sightings.

The episode ended when distraught Soviet trainmen closed the curtains and directed the three not to look out the windows.

According to Ryan’s notes from the interview:

There were two lights towards the inside of the disc which remained stationary as the outer surface went around. . . . The lights sat near the



top of the disc. If a line representing the diameter of the disc were divided into three segments, the lights would have been located at the two points of division between the middle segment and the two outside segments. . . . The aircraft was circular. The aircraft was round. It resembled a flying saucer.

There is no evidence that the report was ever passed on to **Project Blue Book**.

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## SEX AND UFOS

In recent years, as the **abduction phenomenon** has become an ever more prominent aspect of the UFO controversy, reports alleging sexual intimacies, sought or unsought, between witnesses and alien entities have proliferated. They are, of course, hard to believe. If they are not all reducible to **hoax**, delusion, or psychiatric disorder, neither are they certifiably real events. In cases like these, where the most extraordinary sorts of claims are being made, the manifest sincerity of many witnesses is worth noting, but it amounts to evidence only of the affected individuals' conviction that they participated, happily or unhappily, in the most exotic erotic experiences imaginable. In short, the accounts that follow should be read with all appropriate caution.

**Astroeroticism.** Sexual themes surfaced occasionally, though rarely, in the **contactee** literature of the 1950s, most luridly in the stories by Howard Menger and by his mistress (and subsequent wife) Connie Weber. Menger, a New Jersey sign-painter, went public in 1956, with stories of space encounters going back to 1932, when he encountered a lovely blond Venusian woman sitting on a rock in the woods. Though he was only 10 years old, he felt an overwhelming "physical attraction" to her.

During World War II, as a G.I. stationed in Hawaii, Menger met a beautiful dark-haired spacewoman. As he would tell the tale:

Although I shall always remember the girl on the rock with a special kind of memory, this girl, too, exuded the same expression of spiritual love and deep understanding. Standing in her presence I was filled with awe and humility, but not without a strong physical attraction one finds impossible to allay when in the presence of these women.

She immediately sensed that part of my feelings and also my embarrassment at knowing that she sensed them.

"Oh, Howard," she almost chided, "it's only a natural thing. I feel it myself. It flows from you to me as from me to you."

Back home in New Jersey in 1946, Menger met the "girl on the rock" again, only this time she stepped out of a flying saucer, dressed in a "blue-gray ski-type uniform . . . which fitted loosely over what was a shapely body." After informing him of his coming mission (to aid the space people in their benevolent efforts to save the human race from itself), she gave him a chaste kiss on the cheek. When Menger asked if they would meet again, she said no, but one day he would meet her sister, a Venusian now in an earth incarnation. "She will work with you and be with you for the duration of this life span," the spacewoman said. "You will recognize her the moment your eyes fall upon her."

Ten years later contactee followers flocked to Menger's farm near High Bridge, where objects Menger identified as spacecraft and shadowy figures he called space people sparked a sensation and local press coverage. A small group of devoted spiritual seekers gathered regularly at the farm. One day, as California contactee **George Van Tassel** was lecturing there, Menger noticed a "slim, attractive, young blonde woman. . . . I knew at once who she was." Seeing her, he broke through the "memory block" that separated him from his previous lives, and he recognized her as the sister of whom his original contact had spoken. He also saw that they had been lovers long ago, when he was a Saturnian spiritual teacher named Sol da Naro and she a Venusian beauty.

Connie Weber, recently widowed, and Menger, married with children, soon were involved in an amorous relationship whose history Weber (writing as Marla Baxter) would chronicle in *My Saturnian Lover* (1958), an odd book even by the eccentric standards of contactee literature. According to her, theirs were no ordinary intimate relations. Early in the course of their love life, she had this experience:

Alyn [as Menger is called throughout the book] bent down to kiss my brow. I felt the undulating tremors of his body again, and then began a strange and fascinating transformation, right before my eyes. Alyn began to grind his teeth, and turn and twist and stretch. He appeared to be getting taller and stronger. He breathed in deeply, and I felt his chest expand greatly. It seemed as if he had grown a head taller. Not only did he grow taller and stronger, but his facial contour changed. His face seemed to get longer and triangular in shape, and his eyes grew larger and deeper. Even his voice was different—deeper and lower. He had ceased to be Alyn and had become a Saturnian. . . . The next thing I knew he, as a Saturnian, had placed his hands under my armpits and slowly raised me at arm's length as if I had been a doll, and without so much as a muscle strain or change in breathing or the slightest exertion of any kind. He held me thus, high above his head for a moment,



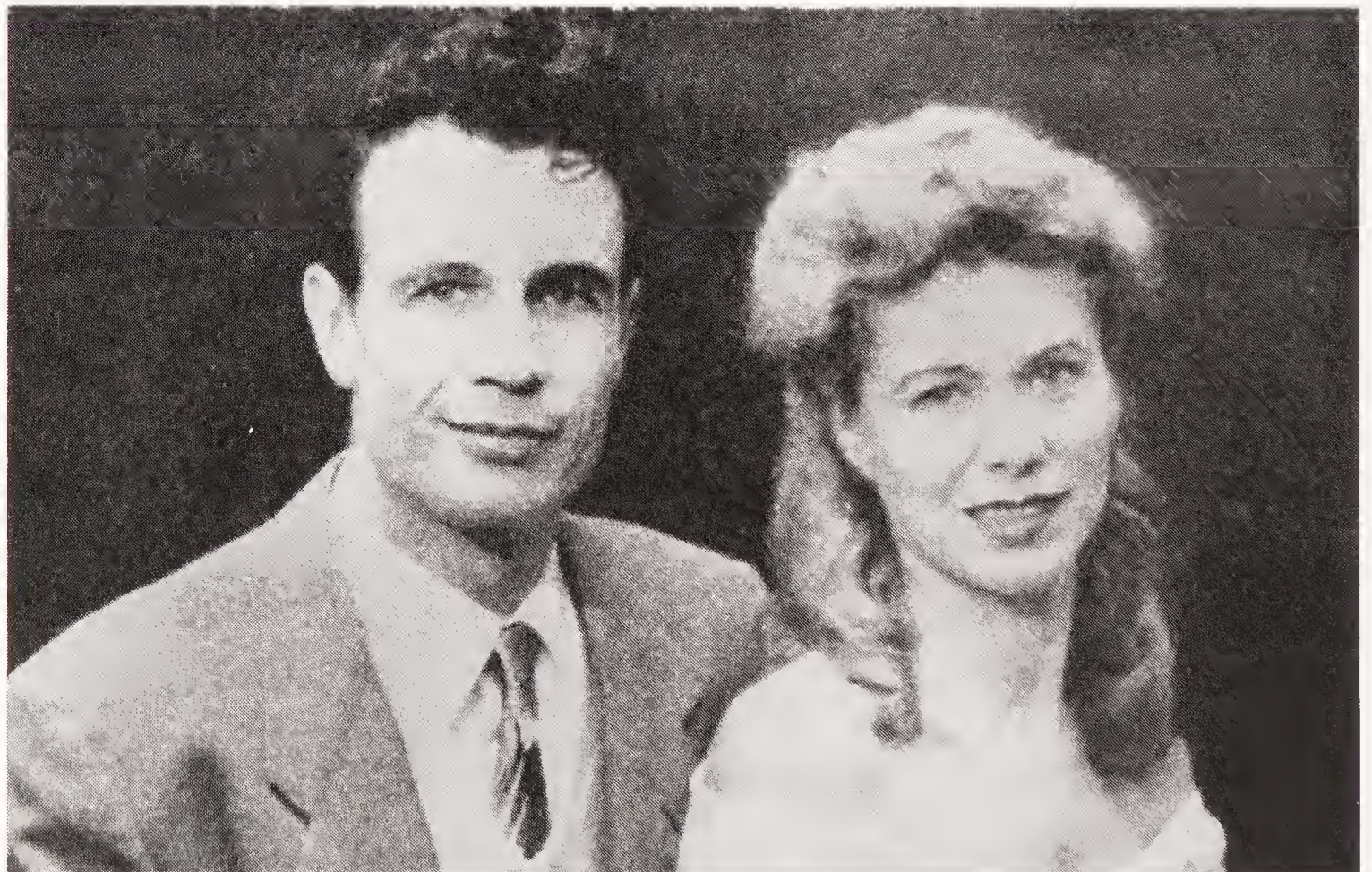
Howard Menger reported sexually charged encounters with alien beings; his second wife, Connie, chronicled their unusual love life in her book, "My Saturnian Lover" (1958). (Fortean Picture Library)

looking up at me with the most wondrously loving eyes, then slowly drew me down toward him till our lips met. It was this individual, this Saturnian, this strange being who revealed himself to me as he really was, with whom I fell in love.

South African contactee Elizabeth Klarer claimed not only to have had a long-standing love affair with Akon, a scientist from the utopian planet Meton, but to have borne a son by him during an extended stay on that world. Theirs was not mere earthly sex. "I surrendered in ecstasy to the magic of his love making, our bodies merging in magnetic union as the divine essence of our spirits became one," she recalled, "and I found the true meaning of love in mating with a man from another planet."

**Closest encounter.** Conservative ufologists scoffed at the extravagant claims of contactees, but most took seriously reports of uncommunicative humanoids—the sorts of sightings that eventually would be called **close encounters of the third kind** (CE3s). But one alleged encounter with UFO occupants, though clearly different from a typical contactee tale, involved an aspect of human/alien interaction that at first defied belief and even comprehension.

At 1 a.m. on October 16, 1957, so the story went, a young Brazilian man, Antonio Villas-Boas, who lived on a farm near São Francisco de Salles in the state of Minas Gerais, was dragged from a tractor and into a UFO. There its occupants, humanlike forms in spacesuits, removed his clothing, sponged a thick, odorless liquid over his body, took a blood sample, and left him alone in a room with "a kind of bed." Minutes later a naked woman with whitish-blond hair, attractive but not—





owing to her long, slanted eyes and pointed chin—entirely human in appearance, walked in. Though she never spoke, she and Villas-Boas engaged in two acts of intercourse, but without kissing. After the second she collected a semen sample and put it in a container. Before exiting, she pointed to her belly, then to the sky, as if to indicate that their baby would be born on another world. He did not see her again. After a short time he left the ship.

A month later Villas-Boas communicated his story in a letter to prominent journalist João Martins, and the following February he traveled to Rio to be interviewed by Martins and Olavo T. Fontes, a well-connected physician and ufologist. Villas-Boas made a favorable impression on the two. Fontes would write that “we are not dealing with a psychopathic case, a mystic, or a visionary subject. In spite of this, the very substance of his story becomes the heaviest argument against it.”

As Brazilian representative of the Tucson-based **Aerial Phenomena Research Organization** (APRO), Dr. Fontes wrote prolifically on the UFO cases he had investigated, but he published nothing on Villas-Boas’s claim in spite of a conviction that the young man was telling the truth. He sent a private report to APRO directors Jim and Coral Lorenzen, who did not publish it but discussed it confidentially with other ufologists. Nonetheless, when a critic learned of its existence, he attacked the Lorenzens for associating themselves with a man (Fontes) so gullible as to have listened to a story about an “alleged rape . . . by a somewhat uninhibited female from space.” Defending Fontes (regarded by most ufologists as a sober researcher), Coral Lorenzen retorted that the story was not about “rape” but “seduction”; in any event, it “was never published in the *APRO Bulletin*, nor was it mentioned in my book for the simple reason that we do not feel it was sufficiently authenticated.” In fact, Lorenzen privately considered the story intriguing.

In early 1962 two Brazilian ufologists interviewed Villas-Boas, who was at first reluctant to talk, and reported on the case in the April/July issue of the *SBEDV Boletim*. Though written in English, the article drew little attention outside Brazil. But in its January/February 1965 issue England’s *Flying Saucer Review* (FSR) afforded prominent treatment to what it called the “most amazing case of all.” Between then and 1972 FSR’s Gordon Creighton wrote no fewer than eight articles on the Villas-Boas affair. Soon the Lorenzens, abandoning their reservations, published Fontes’s full report in their 1967 book *Flying Saucer Occupants*. By the end of the decade, the Villas-Boas episode would become one of the best known of all CE3s.

Villas-Boas went on to become a lawyer. Married, the father of four children, he stayed out of the limelight, but in a rare public appearance on a Brazilian television show in 1978, he repeated the story without elaboration. Then, as earlier, Villas-Boas came across as sane and believable, notwithstanding the outlandish nature of his claim. Nothing in his behavior ever indicated a desire for notoriety or profit.

Owing to Fontes’s solid reputation among his colleagues and Villas-Boas’s apparent sincerity, even cautious ufologists would judge the story credible. Yet to all appearances it was one of a kind.



**Interplanetary intercourse.** In later years, however, as the abduction phenomenon came into prominence, the Villas-Boas case was echoed in a handful of reports.

An incident said to have occurred in 1968 made little impression when it was published in 1976 in Hans Holzer's *The Ufonauts*, but reports very much like it would proliferate in later years and generate interest and debate among UFO researchers. During a spate of UFO sightings in the Westmoreland, New York, area, a teenaged girl named Shane Kurz saw a cigar-shaped object late on the evening of May 2. Half an hour later she fell into a deep sleep. When her mother checked on her at 4 a.m., Shane was not in her bed, but she assumed that her daughter had gone to the bathroom. Later, when her mother woke up, Shane was present. But the front door was open, and muddy prints led from the front door up to the bedroom. Shane was lying on top of her bedsheet, clad in a buttoned-up robe and wearing muddy slippers.

"A couple of days later," Shane told Holzer in 1975, "I noticed two reddish, ring-shaped marks on either side of my lower abdomen and a line running from my navel down." Other physiological symptoms, including burning eyes and disruption of her menstrual cycle, led her to seek medical attention and explanation. After a time the problems ceased.

In 1974 Shane wrote Holzer, a popular writer on psychic phenomena, after reading an ad he had placed in a UFO magazine soliciting readers' experiences. They met in February 1975, and Holzer placed her under hypnosis, directing her to go back to that night in early May 1968. She recalled hearing a voice and seeing a light in her bedroom, then walking outside to a muddy field nearby. There a beam of warm light drew her into an oval-shaped UFO.

Inside what looked like a white hospital room, she encountered a small, humanoid being with compelling eyes and no nose. He told her, "You're special," and ordered her to lie on a table and take off her blouse. As she argued with him, she saw a second being behind her:

He is the same, but he has a long coat on, but he looks the same, those eyes, they are telling me, lay down. They are taking my arm and scratching it. It hurts. . . . [There is] a hum in my ears, it is coming through, I know what he is saying. He keeps telling me to relax.

This being, whom Shane thought of as the "doctor," told her that she was a "good breed." The doctor led her to another room, where a needle was inserted through her navel. A scarf-wearing humanoid, whom she took to be the leader, told Shane that she would have his baby. Shane protested angrily, to no avail. The doctor left, and the leader removed his clothes and rubbed a warm, jellylike substance on her chest and abdomen, telling her that it would stimulate her. The being, whose body and sex organ were like a human male's, entered her. Afterwards she hit him and accused him of rape. He said that she could go and she would not remember. She was floated back to the ground.

Though memory of the event vanished as soon as the episode was over, she began dreaming about it a month afterwards. The account elicited under hypnosis was simply a more elaborate version of the dream material. Shane had other UFO-related experiences both before and after the one reported above.

Holzer's investigation did not extend much beyond correspondence, interviews, and hypnosis with Shane, though he did secure a statement from her mother attesting both to the presence of strange lights and to Shane's absence in the early morning hours of May 3. Unfortunately, Holzer made no effort to secure Shane's medical records. Because his book was not much read even by ufologists, the story occasioned no comment or controversy, and no independent investigation was ever conducted.

Other UFO stories with sexual content saw print in the 1970s:

Walking home from a jazz club late one night in October 1967, Eugene Browne of Belfast, Northern Ireland, reportedly observed an approaching object that shot a beam of light in his direction. As the light danced around him, Browne grew dizzy and passed out. When he regained consciousness, he was lying in a windowless oblong room, with a blue light emanating from the floor and illuminating the walls. Metal bands, connected to a square metallic device above him, were attached to his head and wrists.

Four human-looking men and one woman, all wearing one-piece suits, stood around the table. The tallest man said, "At last someone. You will do." Browne was freed from the restraints and led to the woman, who had blond hair, blue eyes, high cheekbones, and thin lips. The woman expressed a desire to have intercourse with Browne, who at first declined but then agreed. The woman told him that her people wanted earthmen's seed and had collected it—presumably in this fashion—all over the world. Afterwards the beings returned him to the table, strapped him down again, and said, "It will not be the last time you see us." Yellow lights came on, and Browne passed out, to revive in a field a mile from where he had stood originally. He watched the UFO depart.

Another incident is said to have taken place on October 16, 1973, at Langford Budville, Somerset. It was investigated four years later by English ufologists Barry King and Andy Collins. The principal wanted no publicity; she did not even want the story to be circulated, though a brief newspaper account was published in 1979 without mentioning her name.

The woman, driving on a back road at 11:15 p.m., observed a light in a field to her right. At the same time her car stopped, and the headlights went out. When she went outside to check the engine, she heard a humming sound and felt something hit her on the shoulder. Behind her she observed a metallic "man." Things became vague over the next few minutes; she would, however, remember standing in the field and watching a metallic disc with light glowing from its windows. The next thing she knew, she was inside a cold room and strapped naked to a table,



where three humanlike figures dressed like surgeons were looking at her. The metal "man," a robot, stood motionless in a corner.

One of the human figures conducted a physical examination of her, at one point placing a suction device over her sex organs. The beings left the room for a short time. Then one returned and placed a pin on her thigh. She went numb and felt paralyzed. As she lay there helpless with her eyes closed, the being raped her. The other beings entered the room, removed the pin, and helped her to her feet. At that moment she lapsed into unconsciousness. Later she found herself clothed and standing by her car. She arrived home at 2:30 a.m. and told the story to her husband. They agreed to keep the story to themselves. Four years later, however, she came upon Barry King's name and confided the story to him and Collins.

In its December 1976 issue the Bogotá magazine *Vea* reported the fantastic claim of a cowman named Liberato Anibal Quintero, who lived on a farm near El Banco in the province of Magdalena. It did not give a date for the alleged incident. Supposedly, around 12:30 one night, a strange compulsion drove the witness outside, where he saw the landing of a "big luminous craft, shaped like a hen's egg." A ladder appeared on the side of the object, and a number of beings stepped outside. The magazine quotes him as saying:

They were . . . less than 1 1/2 meters in height. They were white-skinned, with flattened faces, very high cheek-bones, quite thick eyebrows, and round protruding eyes. I don't think they had either eyelids or eyelashes. There were also three women, with long hair, who came out of the machine after the men.

After a struggle they overcame his resistance by seizing him "in the area of the spinal column." He passed out, to revive in a state of great discomfort. Three of the women were rubbing his body as if to soothe him. They were, he said, "completely naked and in an inviting and provocative posture." He had sex with one. "I noticed that she had no navel," he went on. "She seemed absolutely insatiable, very, very ardent. . . . She was extremely hairy."

Eventually, exhausted, he began to feel frightened. He heard the woman emit "noises like the barking of a dog, and she was answered with barks from other beings elsewhere in the craft." The two other women gave him a yellowish liquid to drink, and it restored him. Apparently—the account is not entirely clear here—he then had intercourse with them as well. Afterwards he felt a pricking sensation in his back, lapsed into unconsciousness, and revived in the grass, the UFO gone. Three hours had passed.

The magazine ran pictures of a man identified as Liberato Anibal Quintero and carried an interview with his wife (understandably peevish about the matter), his employer, and a local physician. Nothing more is known of the story, and caution about its authenticity seems well-advised. The tale bears a number of points of resemblance to the Villas-Boas episode, not the least of them the allegation that

the aliens communicated with a barking or growling sound. This fact can be interpreted either as confirmation of the earlier Brazilian account or as evidence of a hoax patterned after it.

In the early to mid-1980s several other such cases, some harking back to the 1970s, appeared in the literature. One was a missing-time episode involving a young man named Jocelino de Mattos who, while walking with his brother late on the night of April 13, 1979, saw an approaching object. They lost consciousness. Hypnotized in January 1981, de Mattos “recalled” being floated into the UFO and finding himself in a “medical room,” where humanoids took a semen sample (“in a small amount”) from him. A woman entered the room, made sexual overtures, and engaged de Mattos in intercourse. Afterwards she said, “Perhaps the seed will come alive,” and left. The other beings assured him of their peaceful intentions and let him and his brother go. (The brother’s whereabouts during the abduction part of the episode are not explained.)

Unlike most other early sex cases, this one was investigated, and some aspects of it—such as the reported sighting of the UFO by independent observers—seem superficially impressive. On the other hand, the manifest belief orientation of the investigators, plus their naiveté about the efficacy of hypnotic regression (represented, falsely, as more reliable than consciously recalled testimony), hardly inspires confidence among more critically minded observers. True or false, it is one of a number that were being reported in Brazil in the 1970s and 1980s, even as comparable reports from other Latin American nations were rare. De Mattos’s story is unusual, however, in having been translated into English.

An American case involves sex with an alien woman but no UFO. In the late 1970s an Arizona man given the pseudonym “John Williams” wrote a letter to the newsstand magazine *UFO Report* asking to be referred to a UFO investigator or organization. The editors gave the letter to writer B. Ann Slate, who eventually met Williams personally and had physician W. C. McCall place him under hypnosis.

Williams operated a small leather shop. One day in the summer of 1972, he claimed, a strange man with yellow eyes without pupils entered the store and gave Williams a brief telepathic message hinting at a further meeting. On December 4, 1975, two strange-looking persons, a man and a woman, who looked much like the earlier visitor, visited Williams in the shop. They took him to a back room. “The female produced a device about the size of a hand massager and went over my entire body with it,” Williams related. After speaking briefly with the man, she removed her clothes and fastened her eyes on Williams, who felt intense sexual desire. He undressed, and intercourse followed.

This much he remembered consciously. Under hypnosis further details emerged. The woman’s skin—except for her face and neck, bronze from what appeared to be makeup—was white and transparent, her breasts perfectly round with white nipples. A smell emanating from the woman aroused him fiercely. During intercourse, Williams related, the “woman makes noises. . . . It’s animal.” Later he



was told he had been part of an experiment in crossbreeding. The man and woman left. The entire experience had occurred over a period of an hour and 40 minutes.

**The abduction era.** In an extended survey of all published abduction cases through 1985, folklorist/ufologist Thomas E. Bullard remarked on the relative rarity (at least in English-language accounts) of CE3s with sexual content. Bullard's study appeared in 1987, the year in which the sexual aspects of the abduction experience would come to the fore.

The principal vehicle would be Budd Hopkins's *Intruders*, which held that sexual and reproductive matters comprise "a central purpose behind the UFO abduction phenomenon." Hopkins highlighted cases in which female abductees seemed to become pregnant, then inexplicably no longer pregnant; in subsequent abductions (usually "recalled" under hypnosis) they would be taken aboard UFOs and shown babies with both human and alien features. The aliens in these cases were gray-skinned humanoids with large, hairless heads, big, hypnotic eyes, tiny noses, slit mouths, and skinny bodies with thin arms. In some fashion the women would come, or be made, to understand that these babies were half theirs. In later experiences they would see these hybrid children grow older. There would be no oral or telepathic communication between the abductees and the hybrids. Taken literally, such cases imply that alien abductors are conducting genetic experiments or breeding a hybrid race for unknown purposes. Such a notion is, it hardly need be said, hugely controversial.

In his book Hopkins declared, "I know of *no* case in which a female abductee has ever reported an act of intercourse." The pregnancies apparently were caused by artificial-insemination procedures; female abductees described genital penetration by mechanical devices. (In some instances men told of being brought to orgasm by having an artificial item placed over their genitals.) Cases of intercourse involving women did exist, however, even if Hopkins overlooked one in his own book. According to a case Hopkins recounts, an abductee recalled a "dream" in which she had sex with a "weird man . . . with funny eyes and a big head." Afterwards she became pregnant, even though she was only 13 and, she insisted, a virgin. The pregnancy was terminated via abortion.

In any event, Hopkins wrote that he knew of four male abductees who did recount sexual encounters. "If it is difficult for male abductees to recall and describe other features of their abductions," he said, "this particular area is *always* nearly impossible to discuss. It constitutes a kind of rape experience"—in other words, nothing erotic. In two of the instances, the men described intercourse with what seemed to be hybrid women; in the other two, the beings were gray humanoids of the kind described above.

In *Secret Life* (1992) David M. Jacobs introduced an unsettling new theme into the abduction phenomenon: alien-directed human-to-human sexual intercourse. Drawing on hypnotically elicited and conscious recall from a sample group of abductees in the Philadelphia area, Jacobs sought to delineate the contours of

the abduction experience. "The more data I gathered," he wrote, "the more I began to realize just how structured this phenomenon was."

Jacobs found that aliens have some considerable interest in human sexuality. Sometimes they will appear in a bedroom and watch a couple making love. One of the couple is an abductee, and even if he or she realizes what is happening, the individual will be unable to stop, owing to the aliens' considerable ability to force human beings to do their bidding. More often, an abductee will be brought into a room aboard a UFO and directed to another human being who seems unaware of his or her surroundings or may be entirely unconscious. In Jacobs's words:

The aliens make it clear that they want the abductee to have intercourse with the other person, so the abductee either duly climbs up on top of the other person and intercourse ensues or she lies on the table and intercourse is performed on her. If an orgasm is created, the Beings often stare into the abductee's eyes during it. It must be emphasized that this is not a sexual fantasy situation, and most men and women feel that it is an uncontrollable and traumatic event.

In one of Jacobs's cases, the victim recalled that as a 15-year-old girl she had been forced into sex with a middle-aged man who was "absolutely out of it. . . . His eyes are glazed over, cloudy, unfocused."

As they return to their normal life situations, often with no memory of the bizarre experiences to which they had been subjected hours or even minutes before, female abductees experience unusual vaginal disorders or discharges. Abductees may suffer psychosexual difficulties, including impotence or obsessions with sado-masochistic sex, as one consequence of their abduction-related sex encounters. "The sexually bizarre nature of the event is retained deep within the unconscious mind," Jacobs remarks. "Abductees are forced to have sexual feelings while they are focused on a nonhuman creature in a strange setting, and then they are made to forget these feelings so that they are unable to come to terms with them."

Jacobs writes of the "staring procedure" and the attendant "Mindscan." He writes, "Throughout the abduction, both as a way of communicating with the abductee and, presumably, of examining and altering her mental and emotional state, the Beings stare deeply into the abductee's eyes." After the smaller beings conduct a physical examination, a taller being—the leader—enters, stares closely into the abductee's eyes with his own large, dark, almond-shaped eyes, and extracts information from, or injects information into, the abductee's head. Sometimes the abductee may have an induced orgasm, in some instances including a hallucination of intercourse with a member of the opposite sex.

Another form of hallucination occurs when an "abductee is made to believe that either her husband or loved one is with her," even though her sexual partner is really an alien or a hybrid. The penetration occurs quickly without foreplay or other preparation. The penetrating object, which may or may not be a penis, "is



usually very thin and very short. The normal thrusting movement does not take place, but the woman feels a sudden 'pulse'. Then it is all over."

In 1990—two years before Jacobs's book was published—Australian ufologist Keith Basterfield investigated the claims of a 31-year-old woman who reported abduction experiences that began in childhood. The beings she described were the little, big-eyed and -headed humanoids common to later abduction lore; the commanders were always taller beings. Beginning in her fourteenth year, she had episodes of intercourse with these latter entities, at their initiation. She also underwent regular gynecological examinations aboard the craft. She said they were collecting "fluid" and "messing around with my ovaries." She had two pregnancies that she thought were out of the ordinary; in both cases they ended in spontaneous abortions.

As part of its Abduction Transcription Project, the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) gathered materials on 215 cases. In 10 instances, each through hypnotic regression, abductees recounted episodes of forced sexual intercourse with alien entities. Project coordinator Dan Wright summarizes them as follows:

- Three females by human-sized, male entities of unstated anatomical detail
- Two females by human-sized, hairy/furry male beings
- One female by a (6-foot or taller) "Nordic" male—her "mate"
- One male by a tallish "reptilian" female of unstated skin tone or other detail
- One male by a short, grayish-yellow-skinned female (otherwise associated with grey-green reptilians)
- One male by a pale-skinned, wispy-blond-haired female with breasts, apparently a [human-alien] hybrid
- One male by an undescribed female being

In a survey of some 1700 cases, Bullard found a distinct pattern linking sex-related experiences with abductees' ages. "A pattern of reproductive interests, expressed in sexual activity and extraction procedures [the removal of eggs and sperm], continues through the 20s and 30s but tapers off as the abductee ages," he wrote.

By the last decade of the twentieth century, sex had become an inescapable aspect of the abduction phenomenon. Those who subscribed to the hypothesis that abductions are event-level ("real") experiences inferred that alien interest in human sexuality either stemmed from alien fascination with the emotional makeup of *Homo sapiens* or was associated with the generation of the widely reported hybrid entities, or both. Some of the sex clearly had no reproductive significance, as in cases in which abductees reportedly were compelled to masturbate. A few reports, on the

other hand, have apparently to do with nothing but human-to-human sex and procreation. "From time to time," according to Jacobs, "a woman will report that when she was going through puberty, the aliens examined her and said something to the effect of, 'You are now "ripe". You must now breed. Go and breed!'"

**The limitations of theory.** The question of how real these experiences are is not always easily answerable, though one may reasonably ascribe the most extreme claims to confabulation or psychiatric disorder.

One school ties such "memories" to repressed memories of sexual abuse in childhood. In this interpretation the real memories are cloaked in fantasies of molestation by alien creatures. The evidence, however, is inconclusive and problematic. Paradoxically, what evidence there is for a link between abductions and abuse comes from *consciously* "recalled" instances of the latter. As psychologist Kenneth Ring observes (his italics), "*There is a consistent tendency for . . . UFOers [UFO experiencers] . . . to report a greater incidence of childhood abuse and trauma.*" The key word here, of course, is "report." In another study an abductee's protestation that she had been abused as a child and knew the difference between that and her abduction experiences was interpreted by a mental-health professional to mean that they were the same. One psychiatric critic of such theories remarks:

It is . . . perplexing that the victim consciously recalls and reports the abuse which is supposed to be intolerable for him to recall. . . . [P]roponents of this etiology must account for the odd fact that the clinical picture shows us simultaneous conscious retention of the intolerable trauma side by side with the screen memory meant to cover, detoxify and disguise it. . . . [Moreover,] the more acceptable screen memory (i.e., the abduction) frequently lies buried deeply within the unconscious mind of the patient.

As a further complication, a growing body of evidence has called into question many "memories" of childhood sexual abuse. Some of these may themselves be fantasies or "false memories." Furthermore, psychiatric explanations of abduction claims, most drawing on repression, dissociation, multiple-personality disorder, and the like, depend on theories which themselves are in dispute. And in any case many abductees betray no indication of such emotional abnormality or fantasy-proneness.

Yet the alternative hypothesis, that certain human beings have engaged in sexual activity in the course of encounters with extraterrestrials, is so extraordinary—and so devoid of compelling supporting evidence—that a skeptical response is unavoidable. Research in these areas is in its infancy. For now, as we consider extreme experiential claims that do not readily yield themselves to *any* sort of explanation, mundane or mindboggling, we would do well simply to acknowledge the limits of current knowledge and await further developments.

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## SHAG HARBOR CRASH/RETRIEVAL CASE.

→ See Crashes and Retrievals of UFOs.

## SKEPTICS AND DEBUNKERS.

→ See Menzel, Donald Howard; Project Blue Book; Project Blue Book Special Report No. 14; Project Grudge; Robertson Panel; and University of Colorado UFO Project.

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It was April 24, 1964, a Friday, and close to 5:50 p.m. in Socorro, New Mexico. Police officer Lonnie Zamora, who had just observed a speeding car heading south, was in hot pursuit and heading toward the rodeo grounds. Less than a minute into the chase he heard what he thought was an explosion. He immediately thought of a nearby dynamite shack.

When he observed a brilliant blue "cone of flame" off to the south-southwest in the direction of the shack, he veered off to the right onto a gravel road. Even over the crunching-tire sound Zamora could hear a continuous roar. The slowly descending flame fell out of his line of sight, eclipsed by a hill. He turned off the road and attempted twice to drive over the hill, succeeding on the third attempt. Meanwhile the roaring sound diminished and ceased. By the time he got to the top of the hill, all was silent, and the flame was no longer visible.

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Zamora stopped his car and looked around for a few moments until his eye caught a metallic object in a ravine to the southwest, about 150 yards away. His initial impression was that it was a white car lying either on its side or upside down. Then he "saw two figures in what resembled white coveralls, pretty close to the object on its northwest side, as if inspecting it. They were standing between it and a good-size greasewood [creosote] bush. One of the figures—the one in front nearest me—seemed to turn as if it heard or saw my car coming. It must have seen me, 'cause when I turned and it looked straight at my car, it seemed startled—almost seemed to jump somewhat."

The figures were small, "maybe the size of boys," and from a distance they looked "normal in shape." The object was oval-shaped and positioned so that its long axis was horizontal.

As he would write in his official report, "At this time I started moving my car towards them quickly, with idea to help. Had stopped about only a couple of seconds." As he resumed his drive toward the object, the car descended into a dip, and the sight was lost to view momentarily. He radioed headquarters to report that he was investigating a "possible 10-40"—police code for accident. Yet he was no longer sure that was what he was seeing. Maybe this was an experimental aircraft from nearby White Sands Proving Grounds.

He was still on the radio when he stopped for a second time and stepped outside. The microphone slipped from his hand. As he picked it up, he heard two or three loud thumps, "like someone hammering or shutting a door or doors heard . . . possibly a second or less apart." He quickly placed the microphone back into its slot, then got out again. At that moment a roar filled his ears. In the terse words of the police report he soon would file:

Started low frequency quickly, then rose in frequency (higher tone) and in loudness—from loud to very loud. At same time as roar saw flame. Flame was under the object. Object was starting to go straight up—slowly up . . . straight up. Flame was light blue and at bottom was sort of orange color. From this angle, saw what might be the side of object (not end, as first noted). Difficult to describe flame. Thought, from roar, it might blow up. Flame might have come from underside of object, at middle, possibly a four-foot area—very rough guess. . . . No smoke, except dust in immediate area.

Object was . . . smooth—no windows or doors. As roar started it was still on or near ground. Noted red lettering of some type. . . . Insignia about 2 1/2 by 2 feet wide, guess. Was in middle of object. . . . Object still like aluminum—white.

When this was happening, Zamora was within 50 feet of the object. As soon as he saw the flame, "I immediately thought the thing might explode," he told ufologist Ray Stanford, "so . . . I hit the dirt in a prone position there on the slope for a moment until I heard the roar continue and knew there was no explosion." During

that moment he felt some faint heat from the flame. He rose and dashed to the car, watching the object all the while. Because his attention was elsewhere, he collided with the rear of the car and was knocked down. His glasses and sunshades went flying. Staggering to his feet, he kept running, determined to get himself positioned behind the car. To quote from his report:

[K]ept running to north, with car between me and object. Glanced back couple of times. Noted object to rise to about level of car, about 20 to 25 feet guess—took, I guess, about six seconds when object started to rise and I glanced back. I guess I ran about halfway to where I ducked down, just over the edge of hill. I guess I had run about 25 feet when I glanced back and saw the object about level with the car and it appeared directly over the place where it rose from.

I was still running and I jumped just over the hill—I stopped because I did not hear the roar. I was scared of the roar, and I had planned to continue running down the hill. I turned around toward the object and at the same time put my head toward ground, covering my face with arms. Being that there was no roar, I looked up, and I saw the object going away from me, in a southwest direction. When the roar stopped, heard a sharp tone whine from high tone to low tone. At the end of roar was this whine and the whine lasted maybe a second. Then there was complete silence about the object. That's when I lifted up my head and saw object going away from me. It did not come any closer to me. It appeared to go in a straight line and at same height—possibly 10 to 15 feet from the ground, and it cleared the dynamite shack by about 3 feet. Shack about 8 feet high. Object was travelling very fast. It seemed to rise up, and take off immediately across country. I ran back to my car and as I ran back I kept an eye on the object. I picked up my glasses (I left the sun glasses on the ground), got into the car, and radioed to Nep Lopez, radio operator, to "look out of the window, to see if you can see an object." He asked, "What is it?" I answered, "It looks like a balloon." I don't know if he saw it. If Nep looked out of his window, which faces north, he couldn't have seen it. I did not tell him at the moment which window to look out of.

As I was calling Nep, I could still see the object. The object seemed to lift up slowly, and to "get small" in the distance very fast. It seemed to just clear Box Canyon or Six Mile Canyon mountain. It disappeared as it went over the mountains. It had no flame whatsoever as it was travelling over the ground, and made no smoke or noise.

. . . . Noted no odors. Noted no sounds other than described. Gave directions to Nep Lopez at radio and to Sgt. M. S. Chavez to get there. Went down to where object was (had been), and I noted the brush was burning in several places. At that time, I heard Sgt. Chavez calling me

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Officer Lonnie Zamora's sketch of small, mysterious footprints near the landing site of a UFO he encountered in Socorro, New Mexico, on April 24, 1964. (Fortean Picture Library)

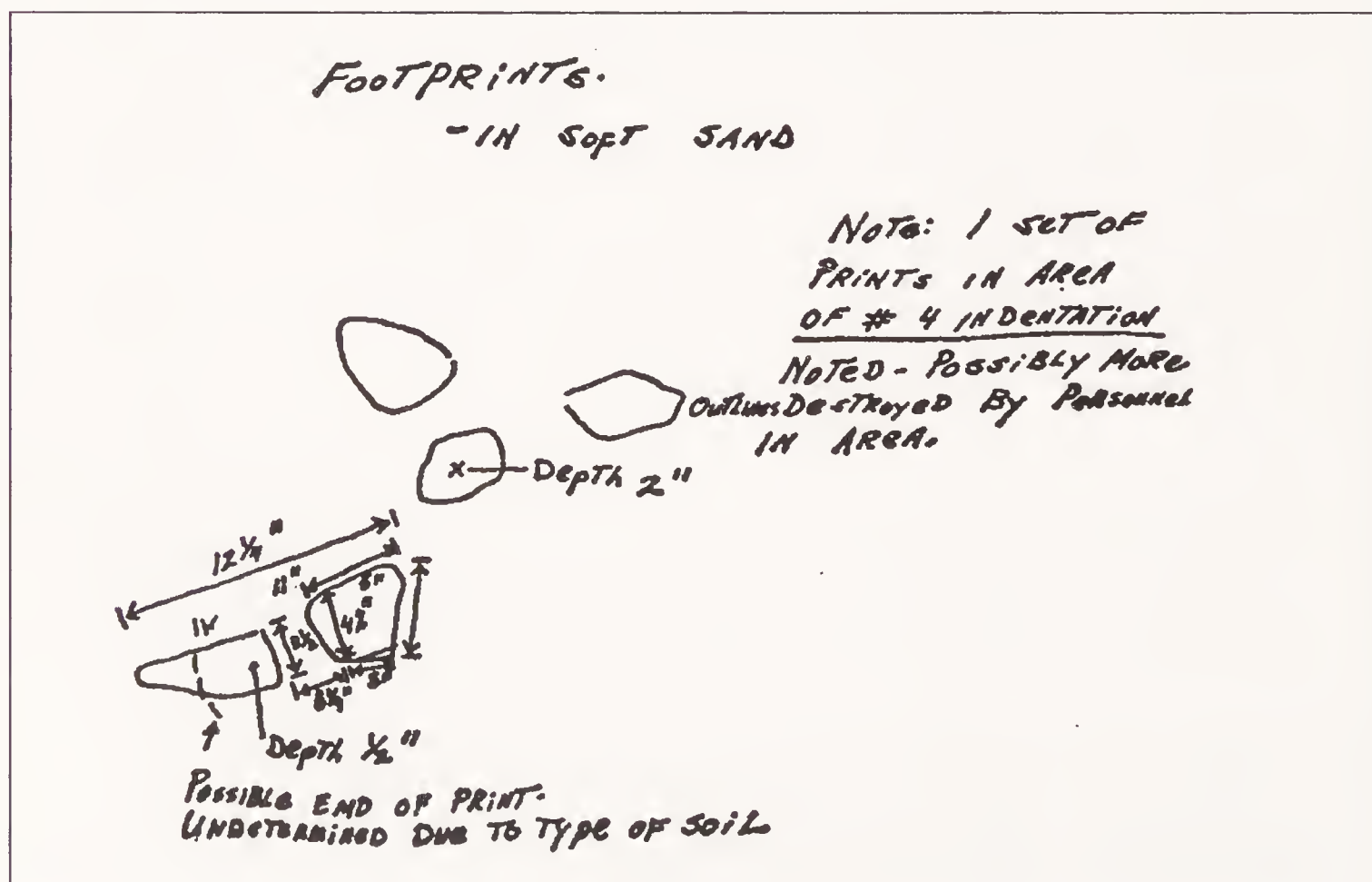
on radio for my location, and I returned to my car, told him he was looking at me. Then Sgt. Chavez came up and asked me what the trouble was, because I was sweating and he told me I was white, very pale. I asked the Sergeant to see what I saw, and that was the burning bush. Then Sgt. Chavez and I went to the spot, and Sgt. Chavez pointed out the tracks.

The entire incident—from the sighting of the flame to the disappearance of the object—took place in less than two minutes. When Chavez arrived, he was struck by Zamora's distraught expression. "You look like you've seen the devil," Chavez said. "Maybe I have," Zamora replied. He no longer was thinking in terms of secret military devices.

The "tracks" were four asymmetrically placed, trapezoidal imprints. Stanford, who saw them, described them thus:

[They] were apparently made by wedge-shaped units being forced, by great weight, down into the rather well-packed soil of the ravine. The dimensions of each wedge involved must have been: a horizontal length of 12 to 16 inches, a width, horizontally, of 6 to 8 inches; and a vertical wedge—depth of possibly 4 to 6 inches, although the total depth is difficult to determine from the soil depressions.

The local newspaper observed, "They did not appear to have been made by an object striking the earth with great force, but by an object of considerable weight settling to earth at slow speed and not moving after touching the ground." The imprints also felt moist to the touch, unlike the surrounding soil.



To Chavez, though he had known Zamora for years and considered him honest and reliable, the story seemed mindboggling and impossible. Chavez examined a greasewood bush situated approximately in the center of the quadrangle. Though a smoke- or steamlike substance was rising from it, it felt cool to the touch. Rocks and clumps of grass looked as if they had been seared. There was no evidence of flame or coals; yet, as an officer who saw the bush a few minutes later would remark, "The flame from that damn thing just sliced that greasewood bush in half, just burned it off clean like a blade of fire had cut through it." Chavez surreptitiously looked into Zamora's car to see if it contained any implements with which the effects could have been manufactured, but he found nothing.

There were also four depressions, four and a half inches in diameter and three inches deep, near the eastern edge of the quadrangle. Later speculation would hold these to be ladder prints—four instead of two because, so it was thought, the ladder had been moved once to secure a firmer grip in the soil. Four other prints, located at the spot where the two figures had stood, looked like the prints of an individual or individuals wearing small shoes; in the middle of each was a little crescent shape.

Zamora, who had sketched the insignia just prior to Chavez's arrival on the scene, showed it to his fellow officer. It was peculiar: an arrow shape pointing upward from a straight-line base; a half-circle surrounded the arrow and came down nearly all the way to the base. Neither man had ever seen anything like it.

Within minutes State Police Senior Patrolman Ted V. Jordan arrived, as did Undersheriff James Luckie and cattle inspector Robert White, who had overheard the radio traffic. Jordan took photographs of the site with his Argus C-3 camera. The group stayed at the site until just before 7 p.m., when Chavez and Zamora left to go to the state police office. Having restored their shattered nerves, the two were back to speculating that the object had come from White Sands, the size of its pilots notwithstanding, and they were looking for guidance on what to do next. They arrived there at 7:05.

**Other witnesses.** Just before 6 p.m. on April 24, a car pulled into the Whiting Brothers's service station in Socorro. Inside were five members of a family: a man, a woman, and three boys, the oldest of them appearing to be 11 or 12 years old. The man spoke to Opal Grinder, manager of the establishment. "Your aircraft sure fly low around here," he said. An "airplane," he went on, "almost took the roof off our car" just minutes before. They had been on the south side of town, driving north on Highway 85, north of the airport, and within sight of a junkyard when they saw the aircraft. The man told Grinder that the craft apparently was in trouble because at the same time he had seen a police car pull off the main road and travel up a hill along the flight path. When Grinder suggested he had seen a helicopter, the man replied that if that was so, it was certainly a funny-looking helicopter.

It was only two days later, when Grinder heard of Zamora's encounter, that he understood that his customer had independently witnessed Zamora's UFO. The



man had paid in cash, so there was no credit-card receipt with which to trace him. Grinder's son Jimmy thought he recalled that the car had a Colorado license plate. Though Zamora's experience would be widely publicized, these witnesses have never stepped forward to identify themselves.

In his book on the case, Ray Stanford mentions a phone call an Albuquerque television station took just before 5:30 p.m. The caller claimed to have just seen an egg- or oval-shaped UFO traveling southward at a speed compared to that of an ordinary propeller-driven aircraft. Stanford speculates that this was the UFO, also reported as relatively slow-moving, that Zamora would see less than half an hour later (Socorro is 70 miles straight south of Albuquerque).

Stanford also mentions a meeting with two women who lived on the south side of Socorro and who claimed to have heard the roaring sound associated with the object, though they did not see the object itself. The women said that many other residents of the area had also heard the sounds, and someone in the sheriff's department told Stanford the same thing. He did not interview any of these other witnesses, however.

There were still more witnesses, according to information that would surface years later when the individuals involved could no longer be traced. In a 1995 interview Ted Jordan recalled a sighting related to him by Robert Dusenberry, who worked for the Socorro Electric Corporation. Dusenberry said he and two other men had been traveling in a car near the landing site when they witnessed what apparently was the UFO's departure. Dusenberry kept his experience to himself and later related it to Jordan, a friend.

Sometime between 8 and 8:30 p.m. a master sergeant driving south from Stallion Range Center, the up-range (northern) station of the White Sands Missile Range, spotted a light-blue glow tipped with orange at the bottom. It was in the mountains some miles to his west from his location near Las Cruces. When the glow intensified, his car engine died, and the electrical system failed. The sergeant, a master mechanic who was in charge of the center's vehicle-repair shop, was startled; he had made sure the car was in perfect operating condition before he left. He stepped out of the car and watched the glow for a short time before it faded out. As it did so, the car started again. When he got to the main station, he had the car carefully checked. There was nothing wrong with it.

The witness was some miles southeast of Socorro. The glow, which arguably could have been from the bluish "cone of flame" Zamora first saw (as, apparently, did others), was situated in the mountains to the southwest of Socorro—the direction it was going when Zamora lost sight of it. It is possible, in other words, that the sergeant observed the same UFO.

**Investigations.** When Zamora and Chavez arrived at the state police station early that evening, Zamora spoke briefly with FBI agent Arthur Byrnes, Jr., who had heard about the incident over police radio. Just after 7 o'clock Byrnes contacted White

Sands, and the officer who took the call immediately notified Army Capt. Richard T. Holder, commander of the up-range station. Holder, 28, was the senior military officer in the immediate area.

Within a few minutes Holder and Byrnes were talking directly, and Holder headed for police headquarters, where he and Byrnes interviewed Zamora. Soon they and several Socorro police officers were at the site. After studying the area, the group returned to the station. At that point dispatcher Lopez mentioned that approximately three reports had come over the phone from locals who said they had seen a blue flame of light in the area. These sightings occurred, he said, around the time of Zamora's encounter. Unfortunately, he did not enter the reports in the dispatcher's log.

Holder subsequently told the Socorro newspaper, "After being appraised of the situation, I attempted to determine whether White Sands Missile Range or Holloman Air Force Base had anything that might produce the conditions described. Neither . . . had an object that would compare to the object described. There was no known firing mission in progress at the time of the occurrence that would produce the conditions reported."

That evening Holder called in military policemen from the Stallion station. Working by flashlight, they roped off the site, took measurements, and collected samples. Holder would recall, "I saw rocks that were normal on one side and charred on the other. There were bushes alive on one side, but when you'd touch them, the other side would flake to ash. When an object blasts off by rocket or jet propulsion, there's usually damage or debris in the area. But there was no indication of that type of disturbance." Holder also noticed that the geometric pattern of the "footprints" was "very similar to the geometric pattern of the vehicular prints. They were some distance from the object, about the size of a footprint that a bigfooted teenager would make."

The next morning Holder was surprised to get a call from a colonel who said he was phoning from the war room of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon. He wanted to know if Holder had prepared a report on the incident. When he said he had, he was ordered to read it into the scrambler. He had just begun to do so when the connection was broken. Still wondering what he, a young captain at a remote post, was doing talking with someone in such a high position in the national-security establishment, Holder phoned the war room, spoke again with the colonel, and then got reconnected onto the scrambler. Years later he was still wondering, "Why in the world were they so interested?"

The publicity, which would be massive once the story hit the press wires, started hours later, and over the next couple of days, many hundreds of curiosity-seekers had descended on the site, wiping out much of the surviving physical evidence. On Sunday, the twenty-sixth, Jim and Coral Lorenzen, directors of the Tucson-based **Aerial Phenomena Research Organization** (APRO), were in Socorro. So were T/Sgt. David Moody of **Project Blue Book** and Kirtland AFB UFO-reporting

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officer Maj. William Conner. Moody and Conner checked the area for radioactivity and detected nothing unusual. They also failed to uncover any radar confirmation of the object's passing. This was not significant. Because it was a Friday evening, the radars at Stallion—used for testing purposes, not for air defense—were off. Even had they been on, it would have been extremely difficult to track an object moving against a mountain background.

On Tuesday, April 28, Stanford arrived to investigate the case for the **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP). Early that afternoon Blue Book scientific consultant and Northwestern University astronomer **J. Allen Hynek** boarded a plane for New Mexico two hours after getting a call from the project's commanding officer, Capt. Hector Quintanilla.

Hynek, who had been associated with Air Force UFO projects since the late 1940s, was growing increasingly disenchanted with what he saw as the inept handling of the phenomenon. Ironically, Hynek, along with one of his graduate students, had been at Blue Book headquarters at Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton, Ohio, visiting Quintanilla at the very moment—unknown, of course, to any of them—Zamora's encounter was taking place. The graduate student, Jacques Vallee, had been actively encouraging the older man to take a fresh look at the UFO evidence and to distance himself from the Air Force's negative party line. By now the traditionally cautious Hynek was receptive not only to Vallee's entreaties but to the Socorro event, which appeared to be an unusually promising and evidential UFO case.

In a private memorandum written on May 20, Hynek expressed his disdain for the situation at Blue Book. "The AF [Air Force] is in a spot over Socorro," he noted. Quintanilla was trying to evade congressional pressure by offering a "vague statement identifying [the object] as an unspecified U.S. experimental aircraft," but in Hynek's estimation that "won't go down. . . . The AF doesn't know what science is."

Arriving at the Albuquerque airport at mid-afternoon, Hynek was met by Maj. Conner. On the drive to Socorro, the Air Force vehicle got a flat tire. It had no jack, so Hynek was forced to hitchhike the rest of the way. The symbolism of this seems a little too perfect. Hynek was happy to get there "before the AF people." According to the memo:

Found Zamora & Chavez were very anti-AF. I got rid of the AF people & got the story from them that night at the jail. (A slow process—they were not eager to talk at first.) The next morning we went & reenacted it at the spot. A NICAP person (Ray Stanford) was already there & lent me some bottles for taking specimens. I had brought nothing.

Z. is an unimaginative cop of an old Socorro family, incapable of hoax, and pretty sore at being regarded as a romancer. It took at least 1/2 an hour to thaw him out. . . .

The marks left on the ground: 4 rectangular scrapings as if a rectangular object had scraped along digging into the ground—deeper at the

end. The gouging was done away from the center in every case. The arrangement was not regular, but the diagonals were perfectly at right angles.

When I was there this had been all tromped up in spite of a wall of stones that a Capt. Holder, an Army "downrange [sic] officer," had carefully built around them.

Still, Hynek was impressed. "I think this case may be the 'Rosetta stone'," he concluded. "There's never been a strong case with so unimpeachable a witness."

**Investigations and theories.** On June 8 the Air Force issued an official two-page report on the case. The document, riddled with errors, starts with the false claim that at the initiation of the sighting Zamora was going "north on US 85" when in fact he was going south on Park Street west of the highway. The report said the Blue Book investigation had determined the following:

No other witnesses to the object reported by Mr. Zamora could be located.

There were no unidentified helicopters or aircraft in the area.

Observers at radar installations had observed no unusual or unidentified blips.

There was no unusual meteorological activity; no thunderstorms. The weather was windy but clear.

There was no evidence of markings of any sort in the area other than the shallow depressions at the location where Mr. Zamora reported sighting the object.

Laboratory analysis of soil samples disclosed no foreign material or radiation above normal for the surrounding area.

Laboratory analysis of the burned brush showed no chemicals that would indicate a type of propellant.

There was no evidence presented that the object was extraterrestrial in origin or represented a threat to the security of the United States.

The Air Force is continuing its investigation and the case is still open.

Where the alleged absence of other witnesses was concerned, Blue Book spoke with no real authority. Hynek would write that he had tried his best to persuade project personnel to conduct a search for possible witnesses, including the one with whom Opal Grinder claimed to have spoken, but "they evinced no interest whatsoever."

Hynek returned to Socorro on August 15 and again on March 12-13, 1965, but learned nothing new or significant. Most people, including Sgt. Chavez, now



thought the object was a secret experimental device, a view that over the years would hold favor among those who could not accept the idea that Zamora had encountered an extraterrestrial spacecraft. (Zamora, reluctant to talk further, expressed no opinion.) Hynek found only one Socorro resident who considered Zamora, otherwise regarded as a man of upstanding character, a hoaxer. Felix Phillips, who lived about a thousand feet south of the landing site, reported that neither he nor his wife had heard the booming sounds Zamora described; therefore they doubted Zamora's veracity. Hynek was skeptical, however. As he wrote in an official memo on the trip:

Phillips was directly down wind from the gully, there was a very strong southwest wind blowing, and the gully is on the opposite side of the hill from where Phillips was listening. This, of course, can make a tremendous difference in ability to hear. Further, there are trucks passing along the highway quite close to Phillips's house, and he undoubtedly is used to hearing backfires and truck roars of one sort or another.

No evidence of a **hoax** would ever emerge. Even Blue Book chief Quintanilla, writing in the classified CIA journal *Studies in Intelligence*, offered this endorsement of the case:

There is no doubt that Lonnie Zamora saw an object which left quite an impression on him. There is no question about Zamora's reliability. He is a serious police officer, a pillar of his church and a man well versed in recognizing airborne vehicles in his area. He is puzzled by what he saw and frankly, so are we. This is the best documented case on record, and

Rocks surround an indentation in the ground that marks the spot where a UFO encountered by Zamora landed in the New Mexico desert. (Fortean Picture Library)





still we have been unable, in spite of thorough investigation, to find the vehicle or other stimulus that scared Zamora to the point of panic.

Quintanilla was not endorsing the extraterrestrial interpretation, but he did not doubt that the officer had seen some sort of unusual aircraft. (Years later, however, in a memoir of his Blue Book years, Quintanilla, lamenting his inability to solve the case and the use “UFO buffs and hobby clubs” had made of the fact, intimated—without bringing any new or relevant information into the discussion—that Zamora had faked the sighting.)

The absence of evidence for a hoax did not discourage two UFO debunkers from proposing separate versions of a hoax hypothesis. In a letter to Hynek, Harvard University astronomer **Donald H. Menzel** outlined an elaborate scenario in which local high school students, using a balloon and various chemicals, “planned the whole business to ‘get’ Zamora.” Hynek found no enthusiasm for this hypothesis among Socorro citizens to whom he showed the letter. In June 1970, debating ufologist Raymond E. Fowler on a Boston television show, Menzel opined that Zamora had seen a “dust devil.”

Drawing on innuendo rather than on specific evidence, Philip J. Klass speculated that Zamora had conspired with Mayor Holm Bursum, Jr. (who owned the property on which the UFO landing reportedly occurred), to manufacture a UFO incident to attract tourists to the town. No such commercial exploitation ever took place, and there is no reason to take Klass’s theory seriously. In an earlier interpretation, Klass had Zamora seeing an extraordinary plasma phenomenon associated with a nearby high-voltage transmission line.

**Other incidents.** The Socorro event was not an isolated occurrence but only the most-publicized of a wave that began in the Southwest and soon spread throughout the country. At 9 p.m. on April 22, a car driving 10 or 15 miles east of Lordsburg, New Mexico, was paced by a large round light, as brilliant as a welder’s torch and consisting of numerous lenslike lights. As it passed about 10 feet over the top of the car, it illuminated the interior of the vehicle and emitted a whirring, whining sound. The UFO then rose but maintained its course on the highway. Finally it veered toward the north and was lost to sight. The sighting lasted no more than two or three minutes.

On the morning of the twenty-fifth, eighty miles southeast of Socorro, J. D. Hatch of Roswell was driving on U.S. 70 between Mescalero and Tularosa when a bright oval object descended from the sky and seemed to land on the other side of Round Mountain east of Tularosa. That evening two motorists driving between Abiquiu and Espanola on U.S. 84, in north-central New Mexico (Socorro is in the west-central part of the state) reported that a strange object, definitely not a plane, flew straight toward their car before shooting away. All they could see of it was a blue-flamed jet stream.



None of these reports received the attention or extensive investigation the Socorro report received. This neglect is particularly unfortunate in the case of Orlando Gallegos, a 35-year-old Santa Fe resident who had an odd encounter while he and his family were visiting his father's ranch just north of La Madera, a remote community a few miles north of the just-mentioned U.S. 84 sighting location and 170 miles north of Socorro. At 1 a.m. on the twenty-sixth, Gallegos stepped outside to chase away some horses that had run into the yard. This accomplished, he happened to look out toward the Vallecitos creek bank some 300 yards away. There, resting on a spot between a dumping area and a dirt road, he saw a peculiar structure.

It looked like a butane tank "as long as a telephone pole." It was metallic, windowless, about 14 feet in diameter, and shooting blue flames out of holes in sides along the bottom. Over the next minute the flame suddenly died out. At no time did the object make any sound. When he went inside to report it, he was laughed at. Finally he went to bed, and when he checked in the morning, the object was gone.

Before leaving La Madera that afternoon, Gallegos told City Officer Nick Naranjo about the incident and soon was telling his story to State Police Officers Marvin Romero and David Kingsbury. They in turn notified State Police Capt. Martin E. Vigil, who dispatched another officer, Albert Vega, to the site. At 7:30 p.m. Vigil and Kingsbury joined him there. Vigil would recall:

At that time, the ground was still smouldering and badly scorched. Officer Vega advised that he had observed four depressions on the ground, one of which was quite clear, the others having been obliterated due to windy weather conditions. Officer Vega stated that this depression was approximately eight by twelve inches in size, about three or four inches deep, and sort of "V" shaped at the bottom.

There were also numerous oval shaped, or "cat-paw-like"[,] markings around the scorched area. These were approximately three and one-half inches in diameter.

Vigil saw to it that Kirtland AFB, Albuquerque, and the FBI heard about the incident. So did Maj. William Conner, who had also been involved in the Air Force investigation at Socorro. On the twenty-seventh Conner went to the site with Gallegos. The same day *Santa Fe New Mexican* reporter Doyle Akers examined the spot, which he described as follows:

At the scene itself the charred area was a peculiar shape, like two overlapping circles. It was about 20 feet across. Large rocks within the area showed evidence of extreme heat, while others within a few feet weren't damaged at all. A soft drink bottle had melted while another five feet away was intact.

An attempt to set fire to chamisa brush nearby failed.

Vega recalled that late the previous evening he had sent a group of drunken young people home from a dance in nearby Ojo Caliente. They would have passed by the La Madera site, but when Vega asked them, they said they had seen nothing out of the ordinary. When he himself first came to the spot, it was still smoking. "That area just wouldn't start burning from a match or a cigarette," Vega said. "You'd have to have some kind of gasoline or chemical to make it burn like that. But I don't think anybody would be out starting a fire at 1 o'clock in the morning."

Blue Book explained the incident as having been occasioned by a fire set in the dumping ground. Its investigation was cursory, and Hynek, who was interested in the case, was refused authorization to go to La Madera. In 1970 a United Press International dispatch quoted Emilio Naranjo, who in April 1964 had been Rio Arriba County sheriff, as asserting, "Our investigation showed that three or four young boys had been washing a car at the river and started a fire to burn the rags they had used. That was the flying saucer Gallegos saw." Nothing in Gallegos's testimony or in the reports of those who saw the physical evidence the next day provides much support for this claim.

It is tempting to link the La Madera blue-flame-spewing object with the UFO seen not far away and just two hours earlier. Unfortunately, the absence of a comprehensive investigation leaves this potentially significant case in limbo.

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- See Abduction Phenomenon; Contactees; Dark Side; Kentucky Abduction Case; and Schirmer Abduction Case.

## STRAITH LETTER.

- See Hoaxes.

## STRIEBER, WHITLEY.

- See Abduction Phenomenon.

## STRINGFIELD, LEONARD H.

- See Crashes and Retrievals of UFOs.

## SUPERSPECTRUM.

- See Paranormal and Occult Theories about UFOs.



## TOMBAUGH SIGHTING

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In January 1930 astronomer Clyde W. Tombaugh discovered the planet Pluto. At 10:45 on the evening of August 20, 1949, he, his wife, and his mother-in-law saw something potentially as important to science. The three observers were gazing at the stars from the backyard of the Tombaugh's Las Cruces, New Mexico, home when the event occurred. According to Tombaugh:

I happened to be looking at the zenith . . . when suddenly I spied a geometrical group of faint bluish-green rectangles of light similar to the "**Lubbock lights**". . . . As the group moved south-southeasterly, the individual rectangles became foreshortened, their space of formation smaller (at first it was about one degree across, twice the diameter of the full moon), and their intensity duller, fading from view at about 35 degrees above the horizon. Total time of visibility was about three seconds. I was too flabbergasted to count the number of rectangles of light, or to note some other features I wondered about later. There was no sound. I have done thousands of hours of night sky watching, but never saw a sight so strange as this. The rectangles of light were of low luminosity; had there been a full moon in the sky, I am sure they would not have been visible. . . .



My wife thought she saw a faint connecting glow across the structure. The illuminated rectangles I saw did maintain an exactly fixed position with respect to each other, which would tend to support the impression of solidity.

In 1953 astronomer and UFO debunker **Donald H. Menzel** "hazard[ed] a guess . . . that a low, thin layer of haze or smoke reflected the lights of a distant house or some other multiple source." Tombaugh rejected his colleague's suggestion, however, writing, "I doubt that the phenomenon was any terrestrial reflection, because in that case some similarity to it should have appeared many times . . . [but] nothing of the kind has ever appeared before or since." To atmospheric physicist **James E. McDonald** Menzel's theory was "physically absurd. . . . [N]o inversion ever known in the history of meteorology could give reflection at the near-normal incidence involved here."

In a 1956 private letter to ufologist Leonard H. Stringfield, Tombaugh admitted that he had had other UFO sightings:

I have seen three objects within the past seven years which defied any explanation of known phenomena, such as Venus, atmospheric optics, meteors, or planes. I am a professional, highly skilled observing astronomer. In addition, I have seen three **green fireballs** which were unusual in behavior from scores of normal green fireballs. . . . I think that several reputable scientists are being unscientific in refusing to entertain the possibility of extra-terrestrial origin and nature.

Over the years Tombaugh expressed radically conflicting opinions about the significance of what he had observed. In January 1957 Associated Press quoted him as explicitly endorsing the reality of interstellar visitation. But in the early 1960s Tombaugh produced a statement that, his earlier rejection of the theory notwithstanding, in effect endorsed Menzel's atmospheric-reflection idea. Entirely reversing a prior statement, he contended that the fact that he had never seen anything like it before or since suggested it was a natural phenomenon, albeit a "comparatively rare" one. For logistical reasons he considered visitation from other solar systems virtually impossible.

In a telephone conversation with McDonald on October 24, 1966, however, Tombaugh said that the subject of UFOs "deserves careful scientific investigation by reliable people" and that extraterrestrial visitation was possible. In 1975 he stated that he could not explain what he had seen; it was "still a very open question."

Tombaugh confided details of another sighting, apparently a year or two after the first, to astronomer and **Project Blue Book** consultant **J. Allen Hynek**, who wrote in a classified memo: "[W]hile at Telescope No. 3 at White Sands [Proving Ground], [Tombaugh] observed an object of -6 magnitude (four times brighter than the planet Venus at its brightest) travelling from the zenith to the

southern horizon in about three seconds. The object executed the same maneuvers as the nighttime luminous object" he had seen earlier.

Tombaugh died on January 17, 1997.

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TRANS-EN-  
PROVENCE  
CE2

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TRANS-EN-  
PROVENCE CE2

In ufology a **close encounter of the second kind** (CE2) occurs when a UFO leaves physical traces at the place where it reportedly appeared. One of the most interesting is said to have occurred in France on January 8, 1981.

At 5 p.m. that day an old man named Renato Niccolai, working in his garden in the village of Trans-en-Provence, heard an odd whistling sound. He looked up to see a "ship" above two pine trees at the far edge of his property. The object was moving toward the garden as if intending to land. When it came down in a field of wild alfalfa, Niccolai fled to a small cabin on a hill above his house. From this perspective he looked down and saw the object resting on the ground. He was about 250 feet from it. As he would later describe it to investigators, "The ship was in the form of two saucers upside down, one against the other. It must have been about 1.5 meters high. It was the color of lead. The ship had a border or type of brace around its circumference."



Suddenly the whistling sound resumed, only this time more loudly and constantly. Then the object rose from the ground to about treetop height before shooting off toward the northeast. Niccolai said, "Underneath the brace I saw, as it took off, two kinds of round pieces which could have been landing gear or feet. There were also two circles which looked kind of like trap doors. The two feet or landing gear extended about 20 centimeters beneath the body of the whole ship."

As the object lifted from the ground, it kicked up a small amount of dust. Gathering speed, it passed between the two trees through which it had arrived.

Niccolai went inside to tell his wife what he had seen. At first she thought he was joking, but the next day, when the two of them inspected the landing site, they found traces on the soil—traces that suggested some kind of large vehicle had settled on the soil and left impressions of its presence. Niccolai, a near-illiterate who knew nothing of UFOs (investigators would later have to explain to him what the concept means), thought he had seen a secret device developed by the French military.

The Gendarmerie were notified and were at the site the day after the sighting, noting in their official report, "We observed the presence of two concentric circles, one 2.2 meters in diameter and the other 2.4 meters in diameter. The two circles form a sort of corona 10 centimeters thick . . . one within the other. There are two parts clearly visible, and they also show black striations." The officers took soil samples, both from within the circles and from outside them, the latter intended to serve as a control.

On the twelfth Group d'Etude des Phénomènes Aérospatiaux Non-Identifiés (GEPAN), France's official UFO-investigation agency (since 1988 reorganized into the Service d'Expertise des Phénomènes de Rentrées Atmosphériques [SEPPA]), learned of the incident and the following month conducted its own on-site inquiries. The traces were still intact. After extensive interviews the GEPAN investigators concluded Niccolai was telling the truth. Initial study of the traces suggested interesting effects on the plant life.

Soil and alfalfa samples were taken to a leading specialist in plant traumatology, botanist Michel Bounias of the National Institute of Agronomy Research. (Toulouse University and the University of Metz also participated in aspects of the research.) Bounias conducted an extensive investigation over the next two years. The results, published initially in 66 pages of small print in GEPAN's *Technical Note 16* (1983), can be summarized as follows:

(1) The chlorophyll pigment in the leaf samples was weakened from 30 to 50 percent.

(2) The young leaves "withstood the most serious losses, evolving toward the content and composition more characteristic of old leaves."

(3) There was evidence, GEPAN reported, of the "occurrence of an important event that brought with it deformations of the terrain caused by mass,

mechanics, a heating effect and perhaps certain transformations and deposits of trace minerals [phosphate and zinc]. . . . We cannot give a precise and unique interpretation to this remarkable combination of results. . . . We can state that there is, nonetheless, confirmation of a very significant event which happened on this spot."

In 1987 GEPAN head Jean-Jacques Velasco, who had led the field investigation, would say of the case:

The effects on plants in the area can be compared with that produced on the leaves of other plant species after exposing the seeds to gamma radiation. Data show that a considerable amount of gamma radiation (10 to the sixth power rads) must be applied to produce a disturbance equivalent to that observed at the site. Should we consider the presence of ionizing (nuclear) radiation? Almost certainly not, since no measurable residual radioactivity is present in plants. However, could the trauma be caused by an electromagnetic field? Probably?

In a 1983 interview with the magazine *France-Soir*, Velasco remarked that research on the mechanical forces responsible for such effects led "with relative certainty" to the conclusion that "the object described by Renato Niccolai could weigh between four and five tons."

GEPAN considered the Trans-en-Provence CE2 the "most significant" and evidential case it had investigated.

**Lingering questions.** Skeptically inclined French investigators have accused GEPAN and Bounias of being "true believers" determined to prove the reality of extraterrestrial visitation and to ensure GEPAN's continued funding. Eric Maillot and Jacques Scornaux cite the work of an unnamed Belgian plant pathologist who allegedly "was able to point out numerous gaps and errors in Bounias' work. . . . [The scientist] concluded that a lot of work has been done to little purpose, and that the results are inconclusive."

Another skeptic, Michel Figuet, reports that Niccolai once told him, "There are so many silly people in the world. On some future day, I shall tell you the whole truth."

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## TRINDADE ISLAND PHOTOGRAPHS

Trindade, a small rocky island in the middle of the South Atlantic Ocean 600 miles off the coast of Bahia, Brazil, was the site of one of the most impressive photographic cases in UFO history.

In October 1957 the Brazilian Navy set up a small scientific base on the unoccupied island, where oceanographic and meteorological research would be conducted in connection with the International Geophysical Year. Starting early the next month, instrument-bearing weather balloons were launched daily. They were designed to explode in the upper atmosphere, releasing the instrument packages, which would parachute to earth to be retrieved by the researchers. By the end of the month base personnel were reporting silvery UFOs that seemed to be monitoring the balloons' movements.

On January 1, 1958, at 7:50 a.m., the passage of a bright point of light, like a mirror reflecting sunlight, was observed by the entire garrison. The next evening a round object with an orange glow circled the Navy tow ship *Triunfo* traveling off the Bahian coast 400 miles from Trindade. As the crew watched, the UFO executed sudden right-angle turns and at other times hovered near the ship. The sighting lasted for 10 minutes.

The most fantastic event occurred on the sixth. The base's chief officer, Cmdr. Carlos A. Bacellar, had just overseen the launching of a weather balloon into a morning sky clear of everything but a single large cumulus cloud at 14,000 feet. Inside the radio cabin Bacellar listened to the signals the balloon emitted as it ascended. Suddenly those signals inexplicably diminished, then went dead.

When Bacellar went outside to investigate, he saw nothing out of the ordinary, at least at first. The balloon was ascending normally—until it came directly below the cloud, at which point it seemed to be sucked abruptly upward. For the next 10 minutes it remained out of sight and inside the cloud. Finally, when it reappeared, it was above the cloud and devoid of the instrument package.

Soon a silvery object emerged from behind the cloud. As it moved slowly from the southwest to the east, a technician gazing through a theodolite spotted it

and alerted the commander, who viewed it briefly through binoculars, then through a sextant. Crescent-shaped and bright white in color, the object reversed course at one point and remained in sight for some time before it entered a cloud bank.

**The photographs.** Later, at 12:15 p.m., as the *Almirante Saldanha* sat anchored off the south coast of Trindade and prepared for a return trip to Rio de Janeiro, 48 crew members and passengers spotted an object approaching the island. Among the witnesses was Almiro Barauna, a civilian who had been brought along because of his skill in underwater photography. Barauna gave this account to João Martins of the magazine *O Cruzeiro*:

I had my Rolleiflex 2.8-model E, which was kept inside an aluminum box for protection against the corrosive effects of water and salt. I had left my Leica with a telephoto lens in my cabin a few minutes before. The deck was full of sailors and officers. Suddenly Mr. Amilar Vieira and [retired Air Force] Capt. [Jose Teobaldo] Viegas called to me, pointing to a certain spot in the sky and yelling about a bright object which was approaching the island.

At this same moment, when I was still trying to see what it was, Lt. Homero [Ribeiro]—the ship's dentist—came from the bow toward us, running, pointing to the sky and also yelling about an object he was sighting. He was so disturbed and excited that he almost fell down after colliding with a cable. Then I was finally able to locate the object, by the flash it emitted. It was already close to the island.

It glittered at certain moments, perhaps reflecting the sunlight, perhaps changing its own light—I don't know. It was coming over the sea, moving toward the point called the Galo Crest. I had lost 30 seconds looking for the object, but the camera was already in my hands, ready, when I sighted it clearly silhouetted against the clouds. I shot two photos before it disappeared behind Desejado Peak. My camera was set at speed 125, with the aperture at f/8, and this was the cause of an overexposure error, as I discovered later.

The object remained out of sight for a few seconds—behind the peak—reappearing bigger in size and flying in the opposite direction, but lower and closer than before, and moving at a higher speed. I shot the third photo. The fourth and fifth ones were lost, not only because of the speed the saucer was moving, but also for another reason: in the confusion produced as a result of the sighting, I was being pulled and pushed by other persons also trying to spot the object and, as a consequence, photographed the sea and the island only—not the object. It was moving again toward the sea, in the direction from which it had come, and it appeared to stop in mid-air for a brief time. At that moment I shot my last photo (the last on the film). After about 10 sec-



onds, the object continued to increase its distance from the ship, gradually diminishing in size and finally disappearing into the horizon.

The object was gray, metallic, and solid-looking, though surrounded by a greenish haze or mist. With a ring running through its midsection, it resembled a flattened version of the planet Saturn.

Badly shaken by the experience, Barauna removed the film from the camera almost immediately but delayed processing it for an hour. Finally he and Capt. Viegas entered the ship's darkroom together, while Cmdr. Bacellar (who had not been on deck when the sighting occurred) waited outside the door. Ten minutes later Barauna showed the wet negatives to Bacellar (there was no photographic paper available) and said that it looked as if the UFO's image had not been picked up. The commander examined the negatives carefully and spotted the image. Subsequently, the other witnesses stated that the object in the photographs was the one they observed.

**Aftermath.** Barauna took the negatives with him to Rio and processed them in his own laboratory. Shortly afterwards Bacellar showed up at Barauna's home to look at the developed photographs, which he then took to the Navy Ministry. Two days later he returned them, and shortly thereafter Barauna was summoned to naval headquarters, where high-ranking officers grilled him. The Ministry sent his negatives to the Cruzeiro do Sul Aerophotogrammetric Service for analysis. They were declared genuine. In short order Brazil's President, Juscelino Kubitschek, ordered them released to the press.

Photographed from a Brazilian Navy ship, this UFO appeared over Trindade Island off the coast of South America in 1958. (Fortean Picture Library)





In the days ahead some of the witnesses gave interviews to newspapers. On the twenty-second Cmdr. Paulo Moreira da Silva of the Brazilian Navy's Hydrography and Navigation Service stated that the "object was not a meteorological balloon, for the one we had launched that day was released at 9 a.m., two [sic] hours before the appearance of the object in the sky. . . . Also it was not a guided missile from the United States because the island of Trindade is off the route of those rockets."

Olavo T. Fontes, a Rio physician who represented the Tuscon-based **Aerial Phenomena Research Organization** (APRO), learned of the incident from naval informants on February 4. On the evening of the fourteenth, at the Navy Ministry, he was shown five photographs. He did not know then that the fifth had been taken earlier than the first four (Barauna's photographs), and to this day little is known about this picture. Fontes believed it was taken by a Navy sergeant in late December at Desejado Peak on the island.

A naval source subsequently told Fontes that the day before Barauna took his pictures, the *Almirante Saldanha's* radar had tracked an unknown object. At 2:30 a.m. on the sixteenth, less than 10 hours before the Barauna sighting, Ezio Azevedo Fundao, chief of surgery at a Rio hospital, and members of his family saw a Saturn-shaped UFO off the coast of Brazil, in the direction of Trindade. At approximately the same time the same or an identical object was observed from the deck of the *Tridente*, a Navy tow ship.

On February 23 Paulo M. Campos, a reporter for *Diario Carioca*, citing an unnamed but "best possible" source, wrote that "more than the sighting of the flying saucer itself, what really made a deep impression on the Navy was the report that instruments like radio transmitters, and apparatus with magnetic needles, ceased operating while the flying object remained in the island's proximity. The Navy decided to consider this a top-secret fact." When he checked with his own sources, Fontes could get neither confirmation nor denial of this alleged aspect of the event. (In a 1983 interview Barauna recalled that just prior to the UFO's appearance all of the electrical power on the ship had failed.)

After Brazil's House of Representatives demanded further information from the Navy, it was given a secret report on the official investigation. The document was leaked in October 1964 to APRO director Coral Lorenzen. After reviewing the various sightings and the January 16 photographs, its author, Corvette-Capt. Jose Geraldo Brandao, concluded that the "existence of personal reports and of photographic evidence, of certain value considering the circumstance involved [absence of evidence of tampering, the presence of other witnesses], permits the admission that there are indications of the existence of unidentified aerial objects." He also noted the "strong emotional upset . . . in all persons who sighted the object, including the photographer, civilians, and members of the ship's crew."

**A hoax?** On November 27, 1959, **Donald H. Menzel**, a Harvard University astronomer and UFO debunker, wrote Richard Hall of the **National Investigations**



**Committee on Aerial Phenomena** to report his "tentative conclusion" concerning the object in the Trindade photograph:

I have in my possession one well-authenticated case of a saturn-like object, whose nature is known and clearly distinguishable in this particular instance. A plane, flying in a humid but apparently super-cooled atmosphere, became completely enveloped in fog, so about all one could see was a division where the stream lines were flowing up and down respectively over and under the wings. The cabin made a saturn-like spot in the center, and the wings closely resembled the appearance of the Brazilian photographs.

The Trindade object's speed and sprightly maneuvers were explainable, Menzel claimed, as an illusion created by the reflection of sunlight on the plane.

But four years later, in *The World of Flying Saucers*, Menzel publicly declared the case a **hoax**, charging that Barauna had faked the photographs via double exposure in collusion with an associate. He wrote, without mentioning newspaper articles and official reports to the contrary, that when reporters had a "chance to interview the officers and crewmen who allegedly had observed the Trindade saucer and could support Barauna's story . . . [n]one of them had actually seen the object." In fact, in 1959 Hall had provided Menzel with a translation of a March 8, 1958, *O Cruzeiro* article that names several of the witnesses.

Menzel reprints a Brazilian Navy press release, but when the original and Menzel's version are compared, some significant discrepancies become apparent. In the latter three words are added and six left out.

The original reads: "Evidently, this Ministry cannot make any statement about the object sighted over the island of Trindade, for the photographs do not constitute enough evidence for such a purpose." Menzel renders it thus: "Clearly, this Ministry cannot make any statement about the reality of the object, for the photos do not constitute enough evidence for such a purpose." Whereas the first statement acknowledges an object and a sighting, the second implies that their reality is open to question—hardly the Brazilian Navy's intention.

Menzel's attack continues in his next book, *The UFO Enigma*, wherein—though citing no source—he outlines the "extremely simple" method that he claimed was used to fake the photographs. "In the privacy of his home," Menzel writes, "the photographer had snapped a series of pictures of a model UFO against a black background. He then reloaded the camera with the same film and took pictures of the scenery in the ordinary fashion. When the film was developed, there was the saucer hanging in the sky." Menzel seems to have woven this story out of whole cloth. He also repeats the unfounded allegation that "no one else, except a friend (and presumed accomplice), had seen the disk flying overhead."

In 1978 an Arizona-based group, Ground Saucer Watch (GSW), which specialized in analysis of purported UFO photographs (and which had rejected most as

bogus), subjected good-quality prints to a computer-processing technique, focusing on edge enhancement, color-contouring, picture-cell distortion, and digitizing. GSW's specialists came to these conclusions:

The UFO image is over 50 feet in diameter. The UFO image in each case reveals a vast distance from the photographer/camera. The photographs show no signs of hoax (i.e., a hand-thrown or suspended model). The UFO image is reflecting light and passed all computer tests for an image with substance. The image represents no known type of aircraft or experimental balloon. Digital densitometry reveals a metallic reflection.

We are of the unanimous opinion that the Brazilian photos are authentic and represent an extraordinary flying object of unknown origin.

Given the number of witnesses, the results of photoanalyses both military and civilian, and the need for debunkers to reinvent the incident to "explain" it, it seems most unlikely that the Trindade photographs were hoaxed.

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## UFOS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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**N**ineteenth-century reports of unidentified flying objects in the modern sense of the term are relatively rare until the final decade of the century, though there is no shortage of sightings of anomalous aerial phenomena, sometimes observed in interplanetary space through telescopes. At the same time there is no compelling reason, in all but a handful of instances, to conclude these are anything other than conventional, if unusual, meteorological and astronomical phenomena. In many cases the reports are fabrications or jokes (see **Airship Sightings in the Nineteenth Century**).

**Representative nineteenth-century sightings of UFO-like phenomena.**  
Cherbourg, France, January 12, 1836: A glowing, doughnut-shaped body two-thirds the apparent diameter of the moon appeared to rotate on its axis as it flew by.

Wilmington, Delaware, July 13, 1860: As a pale blue light lit up the city, citizens looked up to see a 200-foot-long "object"—no further description—at 100 feet altitude. According to a press account, "it moved in a straight line without any inclination downwards." In front of it was an intensely black "cloud"; behind it at 100-foot intervals were three "very red and glowing balls," joined by a fourth as the



main object, "giving off sparkles after the manner of a rocket," then turned south-eastward and over the Delaware River. Then it headed straight east and was lost to view. It had been visible for about a minute (*Wilmington Tribune*, July 20, 1860).

Atlantic Ocean, off the coast of West Africa, south of Cape Verde, March 22, 1870: A gray object shaped like a doughnut divided into four connected sections, with a long hooklike device trailing from its center, was seen by the captain and crew of the *Lady of the Lake*. At an altitude considerably lower than that of the clouds above it, it moved against the wind and was in view for half an hour before it disappeared in the gathering darkness.

Marseilles, France, August 1, 1871: At 10:43 p.m. an astronomer saw a "meteor" pass rapidly eastward across the sky for one minute. Suddenly it slowed and maintained this more leisurely pace for the next seven minutes. It stopped and was briefly motionless before changing course toward the north. Seven minutes later it stopped again and headed toward the east once more. After a final short stop it streaked toward the horizon with "vivid scintillations." It had been visible for 18 minutes.

Pascagoula, Mississippi, August 13, 1874: Around 11 p.m., following a thunderstorm, a huge "luminous electric cloud" sailed in from the northwest, heading on a southeasterly path, and flew over the western edge of town. It emitted heat so intense that some witnesses thought they or their houses were about to ignite. The object illuminated the ground and buildings underneath it. When last seen, over the Gulf of Mexico, it rendered the spars and rigging of a ship at anchor "distinctly visible." Possibly this was a dramatic manifestation of ball lightning, but the large size of the phenomenon (half a mile long in one surely exaggerated estimate) seems to make this identification an unlikely one.

Oxford and London, England, August 30, 1895: Crossing the Oxford University campus just before 8 p.m., renowned lexicographer and philologist James Augustus Henry Murray spotted a "brilliant luminous body which suddenly emerged over the tops of the trees before me on the left and moved eastward across the sky above and in front of me. Its appearance was, at the first glance, such as to suggest a brilliant meteor, considerably larger than Venus at her greatest brilliancy, but the slowness of the motion . . . made one doubt whether it was not some artificial firework. . . . I watched for a second or two till it neared its culminating point and was about to be hidden from me by the lofty College building, on which I sprang over the corner . . . and was enabled to see it through the space between the old and new buildings of the College, as it continued its course toward the eastern horizon. It did not explode, emit any spark, or leave any train or track; but it became rapidly dimmer . . . and finally disappeared behind a tree. . . . The fact that it so perceptibly grew fainter as it receded seems to imply that it had not a very great elevation. . . . [I]ts course was slower than any meteor['s] I have ever seen" (*London Times*, September 4, 1895). Twenty or 25 minutes later two observers in

London followed the eastward passage, over a five-minute period, of a “star” that traversed a “quarter of the heavens” (*London Times*, September 6, 1895).

**Airships.** Beginning in the fall of 1896, a wave of unidentified “airship” sightings swept across the United States. The wave started in California but by March 1897 it had rolled eastward into Nebraska and by the next month had swept over much of the Midwest and South. Hardly a newspaper in the country failed to take note of it, though the coverage typically was long on ridicule, exaggeration, or outright invention and short on strict, or at times even approximate, factual accuracy.

While there were occasional UFO reports in the earlier decades of the century, the modern UFO phenomenon emerges clearly in the late 1890s. Though no longer called such, “airships”—nonluminous cigar-shaped objects often said to carry brilliant searchlights—continued to be reported for decades afterwards (see **UFOs, 1900-1946**) and even up till the present day.

**Nineteenth-century aerial anomalies in twentieth-century UFO literature.** UFO-age treatments of the previous century’s experience of unusual appearances in the sky leave much to be desired. Consider the following:

In June 1873 a man living north of Bonham, Texas, saw, according to the *Bonham Enterprise* of a few days later,

an enormous serpent floating in a cloud that was passing over his farm. Several parties of men and boys at work in the fields observed the same thing, and were seriously frightened. It seemed to be as large and as long as a telegraph-pole, was of a yellow striped color, and seemed to float along without any effort. They could see it coil itself up, turn over, and thrust forward its huge head as if striking at something.

This is how the same story is told in **Donald E. Keyhoe’s** 1950 book *The Flying Saucers Are Real*:

It was broad daylight when a strange, fast-moving object appeared in the sky, southwest of the town. For a moment, the people of Bonham stared at the thing, not believing their eyes. The only flying device then known was the drifting balloon. But this thing was tremendous, and speeding so fast its outlines were almost a blur. Terrified farmers dived under their wagons. Townspeople fled indoors. Only a few hardy souls remained in the streets. The mysterious object circled Bonham twice, then raced off to the east and vanished. Descriptions of the strange machine varied from round or oval to cigar-shaped.

Keyhoe adds that 24 hours later,

a device of the same description appeared at Fort Scott, Kansas. Panic-stricken soldiers fled the parade ground as the thing flashed overhead. In a few seconds it disappeared, circling toward the north.



The *Fort Scott Monitor* of June 24, 1873, tells it thus:

A strange and remarkable phenomenon was observed at sunrise yesterday morning. . . . When the disc of the sun was about halfway above the horizon, the form of a huge serpent, apparently perfect in form, was plainly seen encircling it and was visible for some moments.

Obviously, whatever the Texans and Kansans of 1873 saw, thought they saw, or pretended they saw, it bore no resemblance to a "flying saucer."

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## UFOS, 1900-1946

Around three o'clock one morning in the summer of 1900, as he was returning from a dance in a rural area near Reedsburg, Wisconsin, 14-year-old P. A. McGilvra stopped his horse atop a small hill. The animal seemed to be disturbed by something in the densely wooded area, and as McGilvra searched for the cause, he happened to look up into a cloudless sky brilliant with stars. There he saw the outline of an enormous dark, dirigible-shaped vehicle.

The object passed at a low altitude over some nearby poplar trees, and as it did so, the trunks of the trees bent dramatically as if in reaction to a strong wind, but no wind was blowing. When the object flew over the witness' head, he heard a loud swishing sound. Soon the UFO was out of sight, but the horse remained frightened for some time. When interviewed many years later, McGilvra said that other local people had had similar experiences around the same time.

Reports like these, when they made the newspapers of the period, were called **airship sightings**, though the objects witnesses claimed to have seen only generally resembled "airships" (dirigibles), which in any case were not operating in the United States and which, even if they had been, could not have performed maneuvers like those described in many reports. No history of aviation recognizes these sightings as relevant to the evolution of flight in America or elsewhere. The phenomena described are UFOs of a kind that by mid-century would be described not as airships but as "cigars."

An unusually interesting newspaper account appeared in the March 15, 1901, issue of the *Silver City Enterprise* in New Mexico. The *Enterprise* reported that on the seventh Dr. S. H. Milliken of Pinos Altos had seen a passing airship, "and in support of his statement shows a Kodak picture of same. The machine as seen in the picture has the appearance of three cigar-shaped objects which seemed to be lashed together, the one hanging below the other two." Unfortunately, the photograph was not reproduced.

A firsthand report comes from a Hiram, Ohio, woman named Madge Brosius Allyn. The sighting took place on March 17, 1903—a date she remembered clearly because her sister Grayce was born that morning—on the family's Helmer, Indiana, farm. In mid-evening Madge Brosius, then twelve and a half years old, saw her father burst into the kitchen, where she was preparing his meal, and shout, "Come see this!" The two rushed outside and observed, in the southwestern sky over a neighbor's pasture, a "huge object like a gigantic ripe cucumber with slightly tapered ends . . . brilliantly aglow despite the fact that the sun had set more than an hour before." It had eight windows along the side, in two rows of four each, divided by a dark median line. She recalled:

There was a light inside, brightest in the end towards us, but illuminating the inside of the ship like a kerosene lamp in a large room. The ship was built like a wire rat-trap, with the horizontal stays molding the slightly bulged end and fastened smoothly. The stays around appeared to form squares in the superstructure. In retrospect the covering looked like a thin grocery bag of today, emitting little light through it, but seemingly to be illuminated revealingly outside without casting a reflection into the atmosphere. . . . The windows were squat with two sashes and multi clear glass panes. They were placed equidistant from each other. . . . There were no appendages above or below the ship, and no sign of life, and no noise.



Her father estimated that the object, which was hovering just behind the upper branches of three maple trees, was more than 100 feet long and "30 feet deep." As he ran toward it, it started to move, at first slowly, then with increasing speed. "It took off, zigzagging across the sky like a child's balloon when you let go of the air tube," Madge remembered. Frightened, she fled inside. Her father came in soon afterwards and said that the object had stopped its jerking motion, then headed straight west at a dizzying speed. He told his daughter that the object "is not of this world."

A few months later, on September 13, residents of Stratford, Indiana, and southeastern Indianapolis saw a strange sight high in the late-afternoon sky: a 30-foot-long cigar-shaped vehicle. It circled Stratford, then flew on to the east. One witness was alerted to its presence by the sudden cackling of his chickens. He notified his neighbors, E. A. Perkins and his wife, who studied the object through binoculars. They saw a "canopy" at the top-center, and under it were two figures who were moving backward and forward as if in rhythm. The "airship" did not have a propeller (*Indianapolis Star*, September 14).

A somewhat similar UFO was seen by two young Dixboro, Michigan, men in 1904. Around twilight Wirt Covert and Arthur Eldert were walking home from a trip to a rural grocery store when they spotted a large object moving from east to west at a low altitude. It went behind some tall pine trees and then passed on the other side of a high Methodist church steeple. Covert recalled, "I can still see the steeple outlined between us and this object" and, beyond the object, a range of hills. "Suddenly this object rose [to] at least a 60 degree angle over the hills and disappeared. To this day it is fresh in my mind. Its shape reminded me of pictures of the Confederate gunboat Merrimac[k]. It had sort of a thick mast sticking up from the center and when it banked up so quick I'll swear this mast tipped backward at least 45 degrees and a bright orange light shone in the windows."

At 2 p.m. on July 2, 1907, Bishop John S. Michaud was standing in front of a bank in Burlington, Vermont, and talking with two men when, he reported in a letter to *Monthly Weather Review*,

without the slightest indication, or warning, we were startled by what sounded like a most unusual and terrific explosion, evidently very nearby. Raising my eyes, and looking eastward along College Street, I observed a torpedo-shaped body, some 300 feet away, stationary in appearance, and suspended in the air, about 50 feet above the tops of the buildings. In size it was about 6 feet long by 8 inches in diameter, the shell, or covering, having a dark appearance, with here and there tongues of fire issuing from spots on the surface, resembling red-hot, unburnished copper. Although stationary when first noticed, this object soon began to move, rather slowly, and disappeared over Dolan Brothers' store, southward. As it moved, the covering seemed rupturing in places, and through these the intensely red flames issued.

During the summer of 1908 residents of Denmark were puzzled by repeated sightings of unidentified airships, sometimes seen flying against the wind. The objects were often said to have wings and searchlights and, on at least one occasion, to have an antenna jutting from its front. There are also suggestions in some reports of what during the later UFO era would be called "cloud cigars." Some reports are of odd-shaped clouds from which bright lights emanated and swept the ground. Peculiar "dirigibles" of unknown origin caused alarm in Estonia and Sweden in late August of the following year.

**The worldwide wave of 1909-10.** The British press first took note of the presence of a mysterious aerial visitor in March 1909. In its issue of the twenty-seventh the *Peterborough Advertiser* quoted the testimony of Constable P. C. Kettle of Peterborough, Northamptonshire:

I was on duty in Cromwell Road and was coming out of Cobden Street into that thoroughfare when I heard what I took to be a motorcar, which I judged was some 400 yards distant. It was 5:15 [a.m.] and still quite dark. I walked along Cromwell Road, expecting to see the lights of an approaching car, but none appeared. Still I could hear the steady buzz of a high-powered engine, and suddenly it struck me that the sound was coming, not along the surface of the road, but from above! I looked up, and my eye was at once attracted by a powerful light, which I should judge to be some 1200 feet above the earth. Outlined against the stars was a dark body . . . somewhat oblong and narrow in shape . . . about a couple of yards long. . . . It was going at a tremendous pace, and as I watched, the rattle of the engines grew gradually fainter and fainter, and it disappeared into the northwest. Altogether I should say I saw it for about three minutes.

Though Kettle's was the first published account of the British airship, it was not the first sighting of 1909. The first known report (published two and a half months after the fact in the *London Evening News*, May 18) was that of church organist Charles Maberly of Lambourne, Berkshire. At 8:25 p.m., as he was returning home from choir practice, Maberly spotted a bright searchlight emanating from a torpedo-shaped object heading west at 200 feet altitude. It traveled three-quarters of a mile in the time it took him to walk 50 yards. As it passed out of sight, he heard three explosions that sounded at regular intervals.

The sightings, which began on England's east coast but soon spread to Wales and Ireland, continued well into May, amid growing paranoia about German spies, fanned in part by occasional reports of strangers seen showing up in the wake of sightings and speaking in a foreign tongue or with a "guttural accent" (*East Anglian Daily Times*, May 18 and 20; *London Daily Mirror*, May 21). Conceivably, these were German agents, as puzzled as the British by the reports and seeking answers.

In mid-1908 trappers in Southland, New Zealand, observed something like a "powerful searchlight" moving through the sky. They saw the light on three sep-



arate occasions, and once it appeared with two other lights. One year later, in July 1909, airship hysteria hit New Zealand, with a flurry of sightings of "blunt-head cigars" with searchlights.

The events of July 31 give something of a sense of the wave, which ended in September (during August a few sightings took place in Australia as well). Sometime during the early morning hours a Greenvale farmhand was feeding horses when a loud whirring sound from an airship frightened the animals. The object, 150 feet long, was moving so fast that by the time he roused friends, it had almost vanished. It was shaped, he said, "like a boat with a flat top"; apparently it resembled the UFO seen by two Michigan men five years earlier (see above). Early that same morning someone on Grosvenor Street in Dunedin sighted an airship. A bright yellow light shot up what resembled a "mast" and remained there until the craft had passed from view. At 4:55 p.m. a dark, bulky, cigar-shaped object with a box-like structure underneath it sped over the eastern hills near Akatore and climbed rapidly in the western sky. At 11:30 that night a couple living near Gore watched an airship over the Blue Mountains. In the first few minutes it was nothing more than a bright light, but they soon distinguished a huge cigar-shaped machine that traveled on a straight course with a rocking boatlike motion. The UFO reappeared at 1 and 3 a.m.

As the New Zealand/Australia scare was peaking, a new wave of sightings was beginning in the United States, especially (though not exclusively) in New England. The first compelling airship report comes from Fishers Island, off the southeast coast of Connecticut, where at 2:30 a.m. on August 18 four men at the island's life-saving station sighted an airship 60 feet long and 20 feet wide. Moving at a "terrific clip" against the wind, it came in from the northeast, its engines whirring, a dazzling white light at its head illuminating the dark, cloud-covered sky. According to the *Providence Journal* (August 19), "In the centre of the aeroplane could be seen two dark figures, but the observers could not tell whether they were men. . . . The frames and wings could be seen but the watchers could not clearly make out the huddled figures in the centre." Visible for three minutes, the object disappeared in the west. At least two airship sightings were recorded around the same time in Montclair, New Jersey (*New York Times*, August 24).

September brought a handful of reports from Indiana, including a daylight sighting by several hundred residents of Bloomingdale on the third (*Indianapolis Star*, September 4). Another September sighting occurred in Windham, Connecticut, where E. B. Hanna sighted a high-flying, meandering "traveling searchlight" (*Willimantic [Connecticut] Chronicle*, December 14).

After a few scattered sightings earlier in the month, on December 22 the airship scare began in earnest. At 6:30 that evening residents of Worcester saw a "brilliant ray" approaching them, apparently emanating from a flying machine 1000 feet in the southwestern sky. The *Boston Globe* (December 23) reported that the "rays proceeded from a lamp about the size of the searchlight of an automobile. As

it came nearer it was apparent that the lamp was attached to a large black object, but the machine was so high that its form could not be distinguished." After circling over the town, the airship flew off to the west, where it was seen in the town of Marlboro. Then it returned to Worcester between 7 and 7:30, flying in the winter darkness at a low altitude and flashing a searchlight. Some witnesses thought they could see one or two figures inside, and a police officer swore that it had enormous wings. At one point the object hovered above an insurance building. In Augusta, Maine, at around the same time, the appearance of Venus sparked airship reports (*Daily Kennebec Journal* [Augusta], December 24).

On Christmas Eve thousands of citizens of Boston and neighboring communities saw a high-flying airship, alternately flying and hovering above them. Between Christmas Eve and early January 1910 other sightings of varying credibility were recorded. On the twenty-fourth, at Providence, Rhode Island, an object "came out of the north like a shooting star. As it approached . . . the glare of its headlight grew larger and larger until it appeared as one of the most powerful searchlights, its rays penetrating the darkness at a great distance" (*Providence Journal*, December 25). It had first been seen far up Blackstone Valley, in the Woonsocket area, six or seven minutes before. One of the last New England sightings was of a 50-foot-long string of electric lights seen hovering above a Willimanic building at 1 a.m. during a rainstorm (*Willimanic Daily Chronicle*, January 7, and *Hartford Courant*, January 8).

Such sightings were not, however, confined to the Northeast. At 10 p.m. on December 13, as he looked out the doorway of his house, A. W. Norris of Mabelvale, Arkansas, spotted a bright, bobbing light coming from the south and moving rapidly through the overcast sky. A "cigar-shaped" vessel passed over Chattanooga, Tennessee, at 9:30 on the morning of January 12 and returned the next day (*Chattanooga Daily Times*, January 13 and 14). On the afternoon of the twelfth, Huntsville, Alabama, residents watched a high-flying object believed to be an airship (*Nashville Banner*, January 13). Other sightings occurred in Knoxville (*Knoxville Journal*, January 15).

In 1968 Myrtle B. Lee recalled this 1910 experience:

When I was around seven years old, my brother Jack and I were playing in the yard. We saw a bright object hovering just above the trees about 50 yards from us. It was silver colored and shaped like a zeppelin, but not quite as big. It had nothing hanging from the underside. We stood frozen to the ground, not seeing something like that before. We thought whoever was inside was watching us. There were no windows. When it took off, we saw it start up, and it completely vanished before our eyes. We called it a balloon. When I saw a real balloon, I knew what Jack and I saw wasn't a balloon. No one believed us when we told of seeing this thing. I'm 65 years old now and remember the object well. I'm still wondering what we saw. That was in Fulton County,



Arkansas, one mile across from Missouri. Bakersfield was four miles north and west of us.

**The last of the airships.** Early in the evening of October 14, 1912, an “unknown aircraft”—or at least the sound of one—startled residents of Sheerness, England. At Eastchurch residents lighted flares to guide the craft in case it decided to land. When questions were asked in Parliament, Secretary of State for War Winston Churchill said the government knew nothing about the aircraft. An opposition member expressed the anxious view that it was a “Zeppelin dirigible” (*London Times*, November 22)—no small concern in the context of mounting tensions between Britain and Germany, which less than two years later would result in war. Nonetheless, no zeppelin *could* reach England until August 1915, during World War I.

In early January 1913 the number of airship reports accelerated dramatically. At 5 a.m. on the fourth, at Dover, John Hobbs heard the sound of motors in the air, looked up, and saw a light speeding toward him from the sea in a northeasterly direction. The vehicle, if that was what it was, was moving steadily despite the presence of a nearly gale-force wind. Two other persons, one a police officer, heard the sound but did not see the object (*London Times*, *London Daily Express*, *London Daily Telegraph*, January 6). Two days later, at 10 in the evening, two lights “thought to be the lamps of an airship” maneuvered in the sky over an Army fort near the coast of Lavernock and the Bristol Channel (*London Daily Express*, January 7). As fear of German aerial espionage mounted, a remarkable sighting occurred at Cardiff, Wales. Capt. Lionel Lindsay, chief constable of Glamorganshire, said, “At quarter to five I noticed the object. It was dusk and foggy so that one could not define it.” Still, he could determine that it was large and fast-moving “and it left in its trail a dense volume of smoke” (*London Times*, January 21). Other witnesses backed up Lindsay’s testimony. They reported that after leaving Cardiff, the airship changed direction from due west to northwest (*London Times*, January 22).

When sightings took place on the evening of January 25 over both Liverpool, England, and Chancery, Wales, it appeared that not one but two airships were violating British air space (*London Daily Express*, January 28, and *London Times*, January 30). In each case the object flashed a bright searchlight. An airship appeared over Cardiff on February 1, and it or another was seen over Croyden, England, at 8:45 the next evening (*London Daily Express*, February 3). That same night an Aberavon, Wales, constable saw something over Swansea Bay, and several witnesses said they could detect the outline of an airship reflected in the light it carried (*London Times*, February 3).

Sightings of comparable phenomena continued over two months, ending on April 8 with a mass sighting over Cardiff (*Manchester Guardian*, April 9).

In the meantime sightings of airships were being made on the European continent. In Russia, Poland, Germany, Austria, and Belgium, airships with great searchlights were sparking paranoia. Of the more interesting reports, perhaps the most spectacular involved an alleged airship crash between Jerch and Caputh,

Germany. Two women walking along a rural road at 6 p.m. claimed to have seen an airship catch fire and explode, the remains dropping into the forest below. The fire brigades of three villages, 40 riflemen from the local garrison, and a number of policemen and medical attendants rushed to the scene. Though they searched till early morning, they found nothing. The women were known locally as “thoroughly trustworthy and creditable” (*Berliner Tageblatt*, March 13), but afterwards they were accused—understandably, no doubt—of hoaxing the report (*London Daily Telegraph*, March 14).

Near dusk on June 29, 1913, a fast-moving airship sailed over a Lansing, Michigan, racetrack while a race was in progress. “So swiftly did the strange craft travel,” the *Lansing State Journal* (June 30) reported, “that it was not more than three minutes until it had passed from sight in the northwest. The aerial mystery carried no lights of any description and was too elongated for an ordinary balloon. . . . The craft was at a great height and when it passed to the northwest of the city had reached a still higher altitude.”

In the fall of 1914, many Norwegians sighted searchlight-bearing airships. A typical incident was recounted in the newspaper *Morgenbladet* (November 25):

At Mindlandet in Tjolta last Saturday evening an air-sailer was seen again cruising about Skjaervaer lighthouse, which it lighted up with a searchlight. The airship, which had a height of about 700 meters, descended to about 400 meters['] altitude, wherefrom it let the searchlight play on a passing ship. Thereafter it [ascended] again. Between 20 and 30 people watched it simultaneously.

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Similar sightings of unidentified “zeppelins” occurred sporadically into 1916.

**Other kinds of UFOs.** It is likely that the sightings recounted above and those that follow are different only in that witnesses to the latter did not characterize what they saw as “airships.” After 1913, in any case, references to UFOs as airships—or efforts to cram them into that pigeonhole—fade from printed sources.

Reports that do not mention airships are indistinguishable from sightings from 1947 on. Some examples from the first years of the century:

Perthshire, Scotland, circa 1900: A boy named James Scrimgeour and his sister saw a mysterious light three-quarters of a mile away. It was “proceeding in a westerly direction in zig-zag fashion[;] its speed was far greater than anything on earth at that time except railway trains. [I]t was traveling across fields where there was [sic] no roads and had to cross many fences. . . . [It] seemed to be about the size of an automobile head light but [had] no glare.” It was observed against a “background of hills so that it never rose above the horizon or we might have been able to see [the] shape of it against the sky.”

Pacific Ocean, off the east coast of Korea, February 28, 1904: At 6:10 a.m. Navy personnel aboard the U.S.S. *Supply* sighted what one of them, Lt. Frank H.



Schofield (who in the 1930s would become commander-in-chief of the Pacific fleet), called

three somewhat remarkable meteors. . . . They appeared beneath the clouds, their color a rather bright red. As they approached the ship they appeared to soar, passing above the broken clouds. After rising above the clouds they appeared to be moving directly away from the earth. The largest had an apparent area of about six suns. It was egg-shaped, the larger end forward. The second was about twice the size of the sun, and the third, about the size of the sun. Their near approach to the surface appeared to be most remarkable. That they did come below the clouds and soar instead of continuing their southeasterly course is also curious. The lights were in sight for over two minutes and were carefully observed by three people whose accounts agree as to details.

Southeast of Anadarko, Oklahoma, November 1906: Roy Russell and four other cotton-pickers were taking a brief respite from their labors at dusk when they spotted, at a distance of about two city blocks, a fiery object shaped like a stovepipe nine or 10 inches in diameter and 16 feet long. From an initial altitude of 60 feet, Russell recalled, it "sank down, came toward us, and passed within about 16 feet of us at eye level." Then it seemed to "flatten out" just before it "just blacked out." No sooner had that happened than "another one came sailing along behind the first. The second was just like the first in size and shape. There was another and another. We stood out there watching for almost 20 minutes. I don't know how many of those things went by in that time."

La Porte, Indiana, October 1909: A huge object resembling two inverted bowls, with a row of lights crossing the center, shined a blinding light on a wagon containing persons on their way home from church at 10:30 p.m. The horses reared up in terror. According to one of the witnesses, Ruth Smith, "illuminated tentacles of phosphorescent color" extended from the UFO to the ground; these light streams had the "intensity of a giant flood bulb." After a few minutes it began moving slowly, edging in the direction of the wagon in a smooth, graceful manner. At 10:45 it disappeared suddenly.

**UFOs through the 1910s and 1920s.** Sightings of discs ("flying saucers") grew ever more frequent as the new century put on years. For example, at Alameda, California, in fall 1912, 15-year-old C. F. Rowling and two friends saw, in the northern sky,

three round objects traveling in parallel with the horizon and at about a thirty five degree angle from where I stood. [Headed west,] they were less than a mile away. . . . It was a clear sunny day—about two or three o'clock in the afternoon. They were traveling in a vertical formation one precisely over the other. They were perfectly round and a pale green in color. The shading of the color made them appear as if they were disks on edge and not globular. There were no indications of openings of any

sort. They made no noise or left any vapor trails. . . . I would say that they were at least 75 to 100 feet in diameter. . . . They were in view for about 10 seconds when they passed behind some trees that were across the street from where I was standing.

Near Mount Pleasant, Iowa, on June 3, 1920, 22-year-old Jesse Clark Linch, fishing on a pond, sighted a soundless, blue, disc-shaped object "of a size like a five-gallon cream can" (approximately the size of a fire hydrant). It emerged from behind a grove of 100-foot-high maple trees, flew across the pond, and landed 15 feet away from Linch. Linch got up and walked toward the object, which then rose up, "slowly lifted over the trees in the west, and disappeared—still no noise."

Gulf Coast, 50 miles north of Freeport, Texas, fall 1920: A fisherman spotted an unusual aerial phenomenon around 3 a.m. C. B. Alves watched a disc approach him, then when 100 yards away veer to the south. Three discs were behind it. "The only noticeable difference was in the light emanating from them. The first and last 'discs' showed a brilliant pink pastel light, and the second and third glowed a pale green that was just as brilliant. . . . These things looked exactly like two big silver plates set edge to edge and appeared to be about 25 feet in diameter and some 10 feet thick at the center." They disappeared in the distance.

Two brothers driving cattle around 10:30 p.m. near Milton, North Dakota, in early November 1928 saw a metallic object like a "soup bowl turned upside down" fly by at low altitude (15 or 20 feet) and high speed. It had four or five lights on the front of it, bright enough to illuminate the ground below it. It made a sound like that of air pouring through a tube.

Other reports were of the sort that in the past had given rise to airship speculations, already fading from memory after the British scare of 1912-1913:

At the British front in World War I, on December 17, 1916, soldier Maurice Philip Tuteur and two sergeants major saw something that "looked like a zeppelin," Tuteur wrote his parents that day. "This rose straight towards the clouds (in rear of our lines) not like a flying machine, but straight up. . . . After running vertically, it suddenly darted forward at a pace which must have been 200 m.p.h. It then turned around and darted backwards and then suddenly rising, disappeared in the clouds."

At Rich Field, Waco, Texas, in early 1918, soldiers leaving the mess hall were startled to see a 100- to 150-foot-long cigar-shaped object. "It came directly overhead," according to witness Edwin Bauhan, "and was no more than five hundred feet high so we got an excellent view of it. It had no motors, no rigging, it was noiseless. . . . It was . . . a rose or sort of flame color. . . . I could observe no windows. . . . We all experienced the weirdest feeling of our lives, and sat in our tent puzzling over it for some time."

Between Wathena, Kansas, and Rushville, Missouri, on June 8, 1920, two hundred persons saw a large cylindrical object flying at an altitude of no more than





75 feet. When it reached Rushville, it turned sharply to the right and to the east and vanished into a cloud two miles away (*St. Joseph [Missouri] Gazette*, June 9).

As in the later decades of the UFO age, most sightings were of nocturnal lights. In the summer of 1915, for one example, two British Naval Intelligence officers interviewed Cecilia Peel Yates of Devonshire about her sighting of a large white light that she had seen rise up from the ground and fly off toward the west. Two weeks later they talked with other witnesses who had seen the same phenomenon on several occasions. On September 4, at 9:30 p.m., the officers observed it themselves. According to their official report, a mile from their position a "bright white light, considerably larger in appearance than a planet, steadily ascended from the meadow to an approximate height of 50 or 60 feet. It then swung for a hundred yards or so to the left, and suddenly vanished."

One witness, a hunter sitting in a rowboat, experienced a dusk sighting at Okanagon Lake, British Columbia, in the fall of 1924. He saw a faint blue light moving from northeast to southwest. He recalled that it

slowed up and its course flattened out before it disappeared behind the mountain. As it came around from behind the mountain its light was obscured, but the body was distinctly visible against the faint remaining sunlight. As it came further around it reduced speed still further and dropped lower until it was only about three hundred feet off the water, and it passed my boat at about two hundred feet distant and at a speed of perhaps thirty or forty miles per hour. There was just enough skylight left to give an indication of a pearly silver body color. . . . The body gave off no light of its own, but some faint dark blue light was visible at the rear. . . . As . . . the rear view turned more into visible position, an intense blue light of somewhat paler color, and having variations suggestive of a rectangular grid pattern[,] became visible. After a quarter mile of level travel past my boat this craft turned to a climb of from 45 to 60 degrees, then accelerated so terrifically that even its light disappeared in just a few seconds.

In December 1969 three investigators for the **Aerial Phenomena Research Organization** interviewed a St. Louis-area businessman who related a remarkably detailed close-up sighting in March or April 1927. The witness, who asked for anonymity, said his mother had punished him after he told her what he had seen. X, then a five-year-old boy living in West Frankfort, Illinois, was on his way to the store on an errand. About a block away from his intended destination he glanced toward the west and spotted a bright, flashing disc approaching silently in his direction.

As he watched, it stopped and hovered over a house across the street from him, about 100 feet away. A large, round sphere, it was nearly the size of the house underneath it: approximately 40 feet in diameter. At first the object had been revolving from right to left, but the revolving motion stopped when the UFO

stopped. The object seemed to be made of a stainless-steel material, with a smooth surface. Underneath the UFO was an attached “gondola,” on which four or five illuminated “portholes” suddenly opened. A blue-white light shone through them.

After a time the UFO drifted 100 feet to the right and then stopped again, this time letting down a thin, reflecting line from its bottom section. X thought it might have been a glass rod or pencil-thin pipe or wire. Finally the portholes closed just as they had opened, in an effect rather like that of the “iris shutter of a modern day camera.” The object started to rotate again and took off in the same direction from which it had come.

The next day X returned to the site and noticed that the area above which the UFO had hovered looked as if oil had been poured on the ground and had soaked in.

**UFOs in the 1930s.** Hardly had the Kenneth **Arnold sighting** hit the press wires than individuals started coming forward with stories of their own earlier—sometimes, as we have seen, *much* earlier—UFO encounters. Some typical and not-so-typical sightings from the 1930s:

Tasman Sea, June 10, 1931: Francis Chichester, who as Sir Francis Chichester would become famous as an aviator, sailor, and author, looked out the cockpit of his Gypsy Moth aircraft to see a series of flashes as if from several aircraft. Then he saw the “dull, gray-white shape of an airship” which “nosed towards me,” he would write, “like an oblong pearl.” Chichester glanced off to the left, where the flashes continued. When he looked in front of him again, the airship was gone. Soon another emerged from clouds on his right. It

drew steadily closer until perhaps a mile away when, right under my gaze as it were, it suddenly vanished. . . . But it reappeared close to where it had vanished. . . . It drew closer. I could see the dull gleam of light on nose and back. It came on, but instead of increasing in size, it diminished as it approached! When quite near, it suddenly became its own ghost. For one second I could see clear through it and the next . . . it had vanished. A diminutive cloud formed perfectly to the shape of an airship and then dissolv[ed].

Wattsburg, Pennsylvania, June 1932: In the early evening farmer Reuben Knight

stood looking across the meadow . . . when there appeared out of the scrub woods 400 yards to the south a bright speck of light, which appeared to advance toward me. It grew in size and came up within four feet of where I stood. It was [at] about eye level, a silvery ball, about 14 inches in diameter, brilliant blue. It traveled in a loop when near me and went back into the woods, proceeding at [sic] a steady, straight path, at about 35 or 40 miles per hour. Having disappeared in the woods for about six or eight seconds, it came again and followed



the original route up to me and looped away again. Then I called to my wife, "Come here." She came and I said, "Look, watch," and the silvery ball came again. When it had gone, we waited for it to return, but it did not come back.

Between Humbug Valley and Butt Reservoir Valley, July 31 or August 1, 1933: At about 9:15 p.m. Paul M. Berry, Jr., a high-school science teacher, was sky-watching when he saw two objects shoot across the sky. They were "identical, each more a prolate spheroid than lenticular, with blunt ends. . . . They appeared solid and clearly outlined," Berry recalled, "but this impression was reduced by a dull but considerable green luminescence. . . . There were no detached parts, smoke, trail (which might have been easily visible), [and] brightness changed considerably as they approached zenith and diminished as they approached horizon. . . . I have some reason to believe the distance was in excess of 8-10 miles. The bodies can be compared to the size of a nickel at arm's length or slightly larger." After the first two objects passed from view in five seconds, a third, identical UFO came into view, taking the same path as the first two.

Near Chrysville, Pennsylvania, summer 1933: Among the most fantastic of pre-1947 UFO reports is one told by an anonymous individual to the *Allentown* [Pennsylvania] *Sunday Call-Chronicle* (February 16, 1964). The alleged witness, Y, who desired no publicity, claimed that at 2:30 a.m., as he was on his way to Nazareth, his car had a flat tire. As he was fixing it, he noticed a faint violet glow in a field to his right. Curious, he walked toward it and soon found himself facing a ball-shaped craft 10 feet in diameter and six feet high. The light was coming from a slit in a circular opening that on close examination proved to be slightly ajar. With a push Y opened it and put his head through the one-foot circle to observe the inside. The violet light, emanating, he thought, from the ceiling, made it difficult for him to see, but as his eyes adjusted, he discerned dials, tubing and walls seemingly of a marblelike material as well as a kind of "console" in the center. There were no windows. An ammonia scent permeated the room, which was notably chilly. Y then walked around the object and felt the outside surface, which was slick, metallic, and cold. At no time did Y see the craft's occupants. After 10 minutes he returned to his car, fixed the tire, and drove home.

Panama Canal Zone, 1936: Two members of the Canal Zone Astronomical Society, one of them the instructor, observed a moving orange-red "star"—its appearance comparable to "the lighted end of a cigarette"—in the clear late-evening sky. It was passing from south to north until suddenly it halted. "Then, to our complete consternation," one witness recalled, "it traveled in three small circles—as though someone were writing small e's, only from right to left." A check the next day determined that no weather balloon had been launched the previous day.

**The Los Angeles raid.** Though "flying saucers" would not be called such until 1947, sightings of peculiar aerial phenomena were occurring with ever greater frequency,

and during World War II they were inevitably assumed to be advanced enemy aircraft. Consider, for example, the curious—and, to those who participated in them, alarming—events of February 25, 1942.

The stage had been set two days earlier. At 7:05 that evening a Japanese submarine surfaced 2500 yards off Ellwood, eight miles north of Santa Barbara, California, and fired for 20 uninterrupted minutes on gasoline-storage tanks lining the shore, then slipped away. For all southern Californians knew, an invasion from Japan was imminent.

At 7:18 the following night, the twenty-fourth, blinking lights and flares were observed near defense plants, and an alert was called. When nothing further developed, it was lifted at 10:23. Calm reigned for about four more hours, until 2:15 a.m., when radar tracked an approaching unidentified target 120 miles to the west. A blackout was ordered at 2:21, and four minutes later numerous observers were reporting the presence of an enormous luminous object, larger than an apartment house. Caught in searchlights and photographed, it was subjected to withering anti-aircraft fire, to no effect.

Anti-aircraft batteries also were firing on other, smaller unidentified flying objects. One witness recalled, "The eerie lights were *behaving* strangely. They seemed to be navigating mostly on a level plane at that moment—that is, not rising up from the ground in an arc or trajectory or in a straight line and then falling back to earth, but appearing from nowhere and then zigzagging from side to side. Some disappeared, not diminishing in brilliance or fading away gradually but just vanishing *instantaneously* into the night. Others remained pretty much on the same level and we could only guess their elevation to be around 10,000 feet, but some of them dived earthward only to rise again, mix and play tag with about 30 to 40 others moving so fast that they couldn't be counted accurately." Another witness, an air-raid warden, remembered a "formation of six to nine luminous, white dots in triangular formation . . . visible in the northwest. The formation moved painfully slowly—you might call it leisurely—as if it were oblivious to the whole stampede it had created." A 23-year-old man, also an air-raid warden, sighted a brightly glowing, spherical red object over Hawthorne. "It traveled horizontally a short distance very slowly and then made an abrupt 90-degree [turn] rising abruptly," he said. "Again it stopped and remained motionless." After a few minutes it flew away and was lost in the distance.

The firing continued from 3:16 until 4:14, leaving the streets of Los Angeles and neighboring communities littered with shell casings and thousands of anxious, frightened citizens. Unexploded shells destroyed streets and buildings and killed three persons outright; three others died of heart attacks attributable to the panic.

Three hours later, at 7:21, the unidentified aircraft long gone, the blackout was lifted, and a furious controversy commenced. Those who doubted the "objects" were Japanese airplanes theorized that they were imaginary. Those who thought they were Japanese airplanes charged that traitorous Japanese-Americans had

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flashed signals to them, and in fact 20 such citizens were arrested in the hours after the "raid," though they were later released (*Los Angeles Times*, February 26). Another theory, based on the testimony of an anonymous Army artillery man, held the objects to be hydrogen-filled nickel balloons with attached metal wires. Launched as part of a radar test, they got caught in winds that took them over southern California. No independent evidence supports this interpretation, which in any case is difficult to square with witnesses' descriptions of how the objects looked and behaved.

The objects were not of Japanese origin, and the accusations against Japanese-Americans proved groundless, part of a hysterical—and sadly successful—press campaign to have these loyal citizens placed in concentration camps for the duration of the war. In appearance and behavior the "unidentified aircraft" were, as would become apparent a few years later, classic UFOs.

**Other UFOs of 1940-1946.** The most celebrated aerial anomalies of World War II were the **foo fighters**, a catch-all phrase encompassing a wide variety of flying phenomena reported in both the European and Pacific theaters by Allied and Axis troops. Each side suspected the other had developed extraordinary new military devices. But great numbers of sightings were occurring, albeit with much less public or official attention and concern, in the United States as well. The objects seen fell into patterns that soon would become all too familiar:

Nocturnal lights. Columbus, Mississippi, August 29, 1942: At 7 p.m. Pvt. Michael Solomon, a radio operator at Columbus Army Flying School, was working at the control tower when he spotted a tiny red dot high in the air. It was descending rapidly. Soon the object was "very large" and hovering over the trees 1000 feet past the runway. Then another red dot fell from the sky and took up a position a mile away in the same direction. Solomon and another operator left the tower to get a better view. After six minutes the first object moved upward five degrees. "The next part is hard to describe," Solomon said, because of an odd feeling of sensory dislocation. Then the "object was a blur upon movement . . . [and traveled] way past supersonic speed." As it did so, a "red ring" shot away from it. Washington, D.C., winter 1943: While on his beat between 2 and 3 a.m., a police officer observed a street light up a brilliant purple-blue. "I looked up and to my left I saw these three lights traveling east," he reported. "Each of these lights had rippling lights, such as an air exhaust, coming from its [bottom] side. . . . These exhaust lights seemed to pulsate. They were a greenish red color. While I watched there was another blue-purple flame from the leading object. This flare seemed to puff out the right side and was much longer and briter [sic] than the rippling lights. It went out, down and up in back of the object. . . . As the big flare, which lit up the neighborhood again, died out, I could plainly see smoke mixed with the white lights. These objects were going in a straight line in a V formation and at the same rate of speed."

Discs and cigars. Hinsdale, Illinois, spring 1940: Walking down a street one afternoon, William T. Powers saw five disc-shaped objects in the northern sky. They were traveling together at 100 to 200 mph and disappeared into a cloud from which they did not reemerge. Between Lafayette and Newton, New Jersey, circa August 1942: Three adults saw a huge cigar-shaped object hovering near them. It "had two rows of windows" that "gave off blue, green, white and red fluorescent lights. . . . We watched this object for approximately 10 minutes; then it silently and very slowly took off. From where I stood, I had the impression of hearing laughter or happy voices. . . . As we drove along, I again saw this large cigar-object and suddenly it took off very fast and disappeared." St. Paul, Minnesota, October 1944: Two women about to drive to work sighted what they first thought to be a plane about to crash. Then it abruptly stopped 20 feet above their heads, revealing itself to be a shiny brown bullet-shaped object with a flat end. The object made a crackling noise, turned right, and ascended at a blinding speed.

An October 1943 report from Santa Barbara, California, bears special attention. It is one of those reports—others have already been noted—that tell us what the searchlight-shooting airships of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries really looked like, minus the hysteria and exaggeration of the press accounts, to those who saw them. It also demonstrates that sightings of the particular UFO types that gave rise to airship mythology continued for many years after "airships" as such had been forgotten. The following incident could as easily have occurred in November 1896, when all of California was in the grips of an airship panic.

At 9 p.m., as she gazed out from the balcony of her home facing the Goleta Valley, Wilberta Finley, an air spotter for the Civilian Air Command, noticed a "huge dark aerial object approaching." Moving soundlessly, it barely skimmed over a nearby hill. "From the front of the object a beam of light shot down at an angle toward the earth," she said. "At intervals it swung from side to side as if scanning the hills and homes below. I sat on my balcony, too frozen with terror to move. I realized that the object was flying very low, for it filled my view and seemed just barely to miss hitting our two-story house as it passed overhead. There was no hum of a motor, no windows I was able to see. I was conscious only of the hugeness of the 'thing', its beam of light scanning the earth like an evil eye, and the intense fright which it created in me. I was unable to discern its shape, for it was upon me before I realized it."

1946 was a year rich in reports of discs and cigars. Best known to students of UFO history are the "**ghost rockets**" whose appearances over the Scandinavian countries sparked unfounded fears of advanced Soviet weapons technology. But in North America, where reports were getting little press attention, the groundwork was being laid for all that would come in 1947 and after. Some examples:

Anima-Nipissing Lake, Ontario, April 25: While ice-fishing, Don Cameron and his family watched 12 to 14 small disc-shaped objects descend at a 45-degree angle 75 feet from them. They came spinning down on the ice, rose two feet into the air,



and came down again. As they continued this curious ritual, Cameron walked toward them. The discs then ascended and shot off at the same angle and in the same direction as on their arrival. They left black marks on the snow and ice.

Lafayette, New York, April or May: Driving in an open convertible, Richard Hill and Stanley Ogdrzyiak noticed a gleam in the sky. It turned out to be from the sun reflecting on a metallic cigar-shaped object with sharply pointed ends. It was perfectly smooth, with no protrusions, motionless, 300 to 400 feet long, and at 5000 to 10,000 feet altitude. After two minutes it disappeared instantaneously.

La Grange, Florida, May: A Navy lieutenant on leave was picking oranges at his wife's family's home when he heard a whistling noise. "Directly overhead," he recalled,

I saw a dark "flying football" . . . flying from west to east at about 1000 feet elevation, possibly less, at the speed of a light plane—say 125 mph. It appeared dark against the bright cloud layer which had a ceiling of perhaps 1500 feet—there was no blue sky showing. . . . There was *no* sound of any engine; it had no wings or other appendages, no props, and no trail of smoke in back. It appeared 15 to 20 feet in diameter, perhaps *less*, and as I watched it curved smoothly in an arc to the southeast and vanished forever in a lower cloud bank. My wife and the rest of the family heard this queer [whistling] noise and all rushed out to see what it was, and my wife glimpsed it as it vanished in the clouds.

North of Chicago, August: A witness reported, "I saw three silver disks going from east to west near the lake [Michigan]. . . . I was returning to Great Lakes Training Center [in the suburb of North Chicago] after taking an officer to Chicago. . . . They were flying in [a triangular] formation."

Bruce Peninsula, Canada, November 29, 1944: Around 3 p.m. R. H. Mortimer and his 24-year-old daughter heard a hissing sound behind them and a moment later saw nine large disc-shaped objects pass overhead at approximately 2000 feet. Moving three abreast in a square configuration, they were lost to sight over the lake.

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## ULTRATERRESTRIALS.

→ *See* **Contactees; Paranormal and Occult Theories about UFOs; and Psychosocial Hypothesis.**

## UMMO HOAX.

→ *See* **Hoaxes.**

## UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO UFO PROJECT

**B**y the late 1950s the U.S. Air Force was ready to shed itself of its UFO burden. To many Americans **Project Blue Book** had lost all credibility. Some thought its explanations for UFO sightings reflected an official desire to "solve" reports at any cost. Others charged that Blue Book was deliberately trying to discredit the subject as part of a scheme to cover up its powerlessness in the face of visitation by advanced intelligences from elsewhere.

Within the project some felt that UFOs were a scientific, not a military, problem and thus not something with which the Air Force ought to concern itself. Yet they also feared a public backlash if they dropped Blue Book precipitously. That left one alternative: the Air Force had to find another agency that would take UFOs off its hands. As it would learn, however, none was interested. Meanwhile, members of Congress were registering occasional expressions of unhappiness with Blue Book, though the project managed to fend off the major congressional hearings the civilian **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP) sought.

In early August 1965 a nationwide UFO wave erupted. This time Blue Book's explanations were openly disputed by astronomers, meteorologists, journalists, and witnesses. A chorus of editorial writers and individual scientists called for a new study. Blue Book's own principal scientific consultant, Northwestern University astronomer **J. Allen Hynek**, urged that Blue Book assemble a panel of civilian scientists to take a fresh look at the problem and suggest where Blue Book should go from there. In a September 28 letter to the Military Director of the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board (AFSAB), Maj. Gen. E. B. LeBailly, the Air Force Director of Information, echoed Hynek's recommendation.

On February 3, 1966, six scientists, calling themselves the Ad Hoc Committee to Review Project Blue Book (also known as the O'Brien Committee, after Chairman Brian O'Brien), met. Five were associated with AFSAB; the only outsider was astronomer Carl Sagan. Though none believed UFO reports represented anything so extraordinary as extraterrestrial spacecraft, they urged the investigation of selected sightings "in more detail and depth than has been possible to date." The Air Force should work "with a few selected universities to provide scientific teams" to conduct UFO research.

At this stage UFOs themselves intervened. A series of sightings in southern Michigan on the nights of March 20 and 21 focused public attention on the UFO phenomenon once again. Sent by Blue Book to the scene, Hynek suggested that the "association of the sightings with swamps" pointed to "marsh gas" as the cause.

The response—nationwide derision—was followed by a congressional hearing on April 5. That day Air Force Secretary Harold Brown told the House Armed Services Committee that while the Air Force had done an excellent job on UFOs, perhaps there was room for "even stronger emphasis on the scientific aspects." Hynek recommended that a "civilian panel of physical and social scientists . . . examine the UFO problem critically for the express purpose of determining whether a major problem exists."

After Committee Chairman L. Mendel Rivers and other members expressed enthusiasm for the idea, Brown realized that maybe he had finally found a way to get the Air Force out of the UFO business. Soon after the hearing was over, Brown acted. Through its Office of Scientific Research (AFOSR), the Air Force was now seeking a university that would accept a contract to investigate UFOs.

The task proved more difficult than anyone had imagined. First AFOSR's Col. Robert Hippler tried. When he gave up, AFOSR scientist William J. Price tried. Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of North Carolina, and the University of California all declined the invitation. None wanted to involve itself with a subject so controversial—worse, disreputable—as UFOs. Col. J. Thomas Ratchford, another AFOSR scientist, took up the task. He had high hopes that the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) in Boulder, Colorado, would be interested. NCAR declined, but its director, Walter Orr Roberts, told AFOSR that the University of Colorado might be interested.



**Condon and his committee.** In late July Col. Ratchford approached the university's most prominent physical scientist, Edward U. Condon. Condon had a long, distinguished career in government, business, and academia. During World War II he had served with the Manhattan Project, which built the first atomic bombs. In 1945 President Truman appointed him director of the National Bureau of Standards, a post he held until 1951, when he became director of research for Corning Glass Works. He taught for a year at the University of Pennsylvania, then went on to Washington University in St. Louis between 1956 and 1963 and from there to Colorado. He had also served as president of the American Physical Society, the American Association of Physics Teachers, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He was a member of the prestigious, invitation-only National Academy of Sciences (NAS).

Condon was not eager to take on the UFO project. He was busy writing a book, editing a physics journal, and running for a position on the university's Board of Regents. On the other hand, his sense of civic responsibility made it difficult for him to turn down the job, and besides, the Air Force was offering the university \$300,000, plus another \$13,000 to cover operating expenses, at a time when the institution was reeling from cutbacks in state funding.

The university had to be convinced, too. Within days of Ratchford's approaching Condon, Robert J. Low, an assistant dean in the university's graduate school, talked with several prominent scientists. Some warned him that the university should stay away from the subject. Even to consider the *possibility* that UFOs may exist was not "respectable," Low was told. On the other hand, Roberts and NCAR associate Will Kellogg urged acceptance. Low, who favored the project, reported what the scientists had said in an August 9 memo to E. James Archer, dean of the graduate school, and Thurston E. Manning, university vice president and faculty dean:

Our study would be conducted almost exclusively by nonbelievers who, although they couldn't possibly *prove* a negative result, could and probably would add an impressive body of evidence that there is no reality to the observations. The trick would be, I think, to describe the project so that, to the public, it would appear a totally objective study but, to the scientific community, would present the image of a group of nonbelievers trying their best to be objective but having an almost zero expectation of finding a saucer. One way to do this would be to stress investigation, not of the physical phenomena, but rather of the people who do the observing—the psychology and sociology of persons and groups who report seeing UFO's. If the emphasis were put here, rather than on examination of the old question of the physical reality of the saucer, I think the scientific community would quickly get the message.

This memo would come to light a year and a half later, with explosive consequences.

At a September meeting of the psychology department, Stuart W. Cook announced that the university was seriously thinking of signing a contract with the Air Force to conduct UFO research, with Condon directing. The project was not, Low's suggestion (then unknown) notwithstanding, going to be primarily a psychological study, but it did need help from psychologists. Two members quickly expressed interest. They were William A. Scott and David R. Saunders. The next day Cook would separately approach Michael Wertheimer, a psychologist who specialized in perception, and Wertheimer agreed to participate.

Saunders, who would become co-principal investigator, was destined to play a large role in the project and in the controversies surrounding it. He was also the only project-connected individual with any prior (albeit recent) interest in or knowledge of the UFO literature. Not long before, Saunders had joined NICAP so that he could read its bimonthly newsletter *The U.F.O. Investigator*.

On October 6 Manning signed the contract with the Air Force, which the next day publicly announced the creation of the University of Colorado UFO project. The project would soon be known by its informal name: the Condon Committee. Low was made project coordinator. Besides Condon, Low, and Saunders, the primary team would consist of these individuals: Franklin Roach, astronomer, Environmental Science Services Administration (ESSA); Michael Wertheimer, psychologist, University of Colorado; Roy Craig, chemist, Colorado; Norman Levine, electrical engineer, University of Arizona; Mary Lou Armstrong, administrative assistant; William K. Hartmann, astronomer, Arizona; Frederick Ayer, physicist, Colorado; Dan Culberson, psychologist, Colorado; James Wadsworth, psychologist-graduate student, Colorado. Other scientists would play secondary, temporary, or brief roles in the ensuing months.

Public response was mostly positive. NICAP pledged its full cooperation (though director **Donald E. Keyhoe** privately feared that behind the scenes the Air Force was in control of the project) and soon was forwarding case reports to the project. University of Arizona atmospheric physicist **James E. McDonald**, a champion of the **extraterrestrial hypothesis** (ETH), took heart from Condon's reputation for toughness and intellectual independence.

Hynek went to Boulder two weeks after the signing of the contract. At Franklin Roach's home Hynek met Condon and other committee members. He noted that Condon had a "basically negative attitude." He chose to believe, however, that "this was only the natural skepticism on the part of a scientist who had not yet examined the data."

On November 11 Hynek and Jacques Vallee, a Northwestern University colleague and author of two pro-ETH books (one published just the month before), gave an extended briefing to Condon and his staff. Hynek urged the project to adopt a rating system that would allow investigators to eliminate explainable sightings and focus their attention on the most puzzling. Vallee spoke of the neces-



sity of standardized report forms that also asked all the right questions, and he emphasized the importance of speedy data collection procedures.

On the fourteenth Maj. Hector Quintanilla, the head of Blue Book, and AFOSR's Col. Hippler spoke to the committee. At Saunders's invitation Keyhoe and Richard Hall of NICAP briefed the committee on November 28. Hall and Saunders would form a close working relationship, and for a two-week period in early 1967 Hall would work in Boulder as a paid consultant whose task was to develop a case book of well-documented unexplained reports. As with so much the project would start, nothing would come of Hall's efforts.

Saunders and other staff spent the rest of 1966 traveling and seeking advice on how the committee could learn of sightings shortly after their occurrence so that it could conduct immediate on-site investigations. The committee already had promises from the Air Force, NICAP, and the Tucson-based **Aerial Phenomena Research Organization** (APRO) to forward interesting cases as soon as they came to their attention. (NICAP would be the most responsive in this regard. It set up an Early Warning Network consisting of its most trusted and competent representatives, who informed the committee of fresh sightings and investigated them.) In November Hynek and Low went to North Dakota, where three months earlier two sightings had taken place. The purpose of the trip was to give Hynek a chance to show Low how field investigations are conducted.

Given the job of preparing a questionnaire for witnesses, psychologist Scott produced a 21-page document. Only one page inquired about the details of the sighting; the rest asked psychological questions. When the questionnaire was rejected, Scott resigned from the project. In his place the committee hired three physical scientists as consultants. The two remaining psychologists, Saunders and Wertheimer, disagreed over whether it would be possible to prove extraterrestrial visitation from the study of UFO reports.

**Conflict and crisis.** By January 1967 the committee was still largely directionless, beset with disagreements about how to proceed even as the various staff members pursued their own particular interests. Thus when the Air Force announced it would meet with the committee on the twelfth to check on its progress, Condon was "staggered" (Low's word). Low quickly composed a list of vaguely defined in-progress projects and then suggested Condon discuss Wertheimer's notions.

Condon dominated the meeting, attended on the Air Force side by Hippler, Ratchford, Quintanilla, and several scientists and on the committee's by coordinator Low and staff members such as Saunders, Roach, Wertheimer, and Cook. Condon clearly wanted Wertheimer's negative views to be highlighted and cut off staff members who disagreed. Nonetheless Hippler rejected Wertheimer's belief that the study should concentrate on witnesses, not their sightings. He did not, he said, want Blue Book or the Air Force to be subjected to yet more criticism for not taking reports seriously.

The meeting went on inconclusively until finally a frustrated Low asked Hippler and Ratchford exactly what the Air Force wanted from the project. The two did not provide a straightforward response. But on January 16, back in his office at the Pentagon, Hippler wrote Condon and made clear what he and the Air Force had in mind: The project ought to be able to come to an anti-ETH conclusion. Blue Book, he went on, badly wanted to be out of the UFO business, and if it took the committee more time to come to a "proper recommendation," funds would be supplied, because even with the extra money it would be cheaper than underwriting Blue Book for another decade. Low wrote to thank Hippler for his clarity, and soon afterwards, in a speech in upstate New York (see below), Condon was publicly repeating the same ideas. Michael D. Swords, a scholarly authority on the committee, would observe that "the fix was in by January 1967."

Though scientists, ufologists, and journalists who dealt with the working staff came away with the impression that they were dealing with genuinely engaged, open-minded individuals, another attitude was already in evidence at the highest level, where Condon and Low reigned. On October 9, just two days after the project had been announced, the *Denver Post* quoted Low as saying that the project barely met the university's criteria for acceptability; it had been taken on only because, Low indicated, it was hard to say no to the Air Force.

Another crisis erupted on January 31, 1967, when Saunders stopped at NICAP headquarters in Washington, D.C., to pick up some case material. Keyhoe and Hall promptly showed him a clipping from the January 26 issue of an upstate New York newspaper, the *Elmira Star-Gazette*. The story reported a lecture Condon had given in Corning, New York, the day before. Condon had said, "It is my inclination right now to recommend that the government get out of this business. My attitude right now is that there's nothing to it." "With a smile," the article said, Condon added, "but I'm not supposed to reach a conclusion for another year."

Deeply shocked, Saunders suggested there had been some mistake. Perhaps Condon was misquoted. Not so, said Keyhoe and Hall; several NICAP members had attended the lecture, and one had already resigned from NICAP to protest its support of what he had concluded was a sham investigation.

The next morning, back in Boulder, Saunders confronted Condon, who read the article, confirmed that he had been accurately quoted, and wondered why Saunders was making such a fuss about it. It took the younger man half an hour to get Condon to understand the effect his words were having on those the committee was counting on to provide it with case material. Reluctantly Condon wrote Keyhoe to claim that the quotes were taken out of context.

Meanwhile Condon was participating in no field investigations, and he seldom sought out staff members. Nearly all communications came through Low. Condon dozed through briefings as if visibly expressing his contempt for the speakers (one of whom, McDonald, was growing ever more vocally critical). At one point Hall flew to Boulder and personally handed Condon a comprehensive report on



NICAP's investigation of the **Portage County sightings**, an extraordinary multiple-witness case in Ohio, involving a two-state police-car chase of a large, low-flying UFO. Much later Hall came to realize that Condon had paid no attention to the document. The case would not even be mentioned in the committee's final report.

The only thing that did interest Condon was the crackpot contingent of the saucer world. On June 20, the openly expressed displeasure of all staff members notwithstanding, he attended the cartoonish "Congress of Scientific Ufologists" in New York City. He regaled scientific colleagues and lecture audiences with tales of **contactees** and other eccentrics. He even dispatched field investigators to sites where contactees had predicted landings.

Low occupied himself with adding reports to the case book, making little distinction between those that might be scientifically interesting and those that were obviously explainable. Within the project Low let it be known that he considered UFOs silly and the ETH absurd. In March 1967 he put those views into a supposedly confidential position paper and distributed it to the staff; yet he had been expressing the same sentiments in quasi-public discussions and lectures to various professional groups already. In August, while in Europe representing the committee at an International Astronomical Union conference in Prague, he took a side trip to Loch Ness. He explained later that he wanted to compare belief in the loch's fabled monster with belief in another nonexistent phenomenon, UFOs.

On the evening of September 21, Saunders took a call from Keyhoe. The day before, Keyhoe said, NICAP had learned of an after-dinner speech Condon had given in Washington to an audience of former National Bureau of Standards colleagues. It concentrated almost entirely on three crackpot cases. Not all audience members had been amused, and though there was no press coverage, word got to NICAP. Keyhoe informed Saunders that NICAP had come to the provisional decision to sever its ties with the project. He added, however, that the membership still knew nothing of this, and if Saunders could think of a convincing reason why NICAP should not abandon the project, Keyhoe was willing to listen to it.

Saunders went to Low, who urged him to do whatever he could to mollify Keyhoe. Saunders phoned Keyhoe. Obviously Condon was not objective, Saunders conceded, but his views were his own, not the project's, and he should be made to state that distinction whenever he expressed his opinion in public.

When Saunders went to Condon to apprise him of the new developments and his concerns about them, Condon shrugged; if NICAP was going to leave, so be it. Soon afterwards he spoke to a Denver newspaper, the *Rocky Mountain News*, and praised a recent anti-ETH paper published in *Science*. The headline reported that Condon had grown "disenchanted." Privately Condon growled that he had never been "enchanted" to start with. The newspaper story had Low agreeing with Condon. By now all that was keeping the staff from open revolt was one hold-out: Roy Craig, who insisted Condon still had his full confidence.

Nor, even with this provocation, did NICAP effect an open break. It did decide that it would submit no more case material from its Washington office. It also warned Low that if it was not persuaded that the project was going to conduct itself more impartially, it would shut down the Early Warning Network and end all cooperation between the project and NICAP's subcommittees.

In response Low flew to Washington in October and conferred with Keyhoe and his new assistant director, Gordon Lore. Low freely acknowledged that Condon's opinion of UFOs was "negative." He also said something Keyhoe and Lore found, the former would later tell Condon, "incredible and extremely disturbing":

I see no reason why you have to determine whether the Colorado Project is on the level or not. Your decision should be to send all possible good evidence in hopes of leading to a positive conclusion. Even if it were negative, you could truthfully say you felt this was a wise action to try to convince the project.

What, Keyhoe and Lore wanted to know, would be the point of that? Why cooperate with a project when it clearly had no interest in NICAP's evidence? Why, for that matter, did Low even *want* NICAP to keep sending cases? Low's response was blunt and cynical: "If you don't, the project could be accused of reaching a conclusion without all of NICAP's evidence." Though Low conceded that other project members had a more positive view of the UFO phenomenon, he also said that as committee head Condon could overrule all dissenting opinion and represent his own conclusions as the project's. This despite the fact, also acknowledged by Low, that Condon had conducted not a single field investigation.

In a November 14 letter addressed to Condon, with a copy to Low, Keyhoe cited Condon's public statements and recounted NICAP's unsatisfactory exchange with Low. He asked a series of probing questions about the project's handling of cases, its relationship to the Air Force, Condon's personal knowledge of the NICAP-submitted material (had he even looked at it?), and his own investigations (had he conducted any?). Keyhoe already knew the answer to this last question. Condon and Low coolly replied that they had no obligation to answer any of the questions.

**Fracture and fiasco.** In the midst of all this, the staff was doing its best to investigate new cases received through the Early Warning Network. (Despite its earlier commitment to provide the committee with current sightings, Blue Book seldom did so, to everybody's annoyance, even the normally apathetic Condon's.) UFO activity was at an ebb, however, so staff members often turned to older cases.

Saunders and Craig, for example, reinvestigated one in which a Great Falls, Montana, man filmed apparent UFOs on the morning of August 15, 1950 (see **Montana Film**). Saunders would call this the "one sighting of all time that did more than any other to convince me that there is something to the UFO problem." Wertheimer reinterviewed witnesses and airport personnel who had participated in the classic radar/visual case that took place over Washington, D.C., in July 1952



(see **Washington National Radar/Visual Case**). Between August 1966 and December 1967 there were, according to one estimate, some 38 field trips, usually taken by Craig or James Wadsworth. Saunders devoted much of his time to the creation of a computer database that would allow statistical studies of UFO reports.

There was talk of preparing a minority report. The potential danger to serious UFO research from Condon's actions seemed enormous to Saunders, Levine, and other staff members. Most were thoroughly alienated from Condon and Low. Saunders quietly began to plan a report that, after reviewing the most evidential cases, would recommend an expanded, more fully funded study.

The most notorious episode in the history of the Condon Committee had its genesis in a chance discovery made in July 1967. Craig, one of the newer members of the project (he had been there two months), was slated to speak about the project to a couple of audiences in Portland, Oregon. He asked Low for some background material, and among other files Low handed him one marked "AF Contract and Background." As he read through it, Craig came upon Low's August 1966 memo—eventually to be tagged the "trick memo." He showed it to Norman Levine, who had joined the project around the time Craig had. "See if this doesn't give you a funny feeling in the stomach," Craig said. It did.

Levine took it to Saunders. As he studied it, Saunders reflected that nothing in it surprised him. It was exactly in line with the actions and attitudes Low had demonstrated all along. The memo was copied and shown to other staff members, none of whom said anything to Low or Condon. Saunders showed a copy to Keyhoe, and now NICAP knew. Keyhoe in turn gave one to McDonald.

Condon and Low detested the scrappy, aggressive McDonald, who had been among the first to see what Condon had in mind for the project. All along McDonald had felt *he*, not Condon, ought to be leading the project, and by early 1967 he was communicating criticisms of Condon's efforts to NAS president Frederick Seitz. (According to agreement, NAS was to review the project's findings prior to publication.) Meanwhile he was keeping in regular touch with Saunders and Levine and discussing with them possible joint, post-project UFO studies, perhaps as part of a formal organization that would publish a professional journal. It was not until August 1967, however, that McDonald would get a formal invitation to brief the committee. Condon was barely civil to him.

Still, McDonald, whose expertise on the UFO phenomenon no one disputed, could not be ignored. On January 19, 1968, Low called him and asked what he knew about earlier statistical studies of UFOs. McDonald saw this as an opening to discuss with Low his reservations about the project's operation and direction. Low made it clear he had no interest in McDonald's opinions. Unable to exorcise his frustrations any other way, the University of Arizona physicist sat down and composed a long letter to Low on January 31.

He cited Condon's negative comments, his crackpot obsession, his noninvolvement in field investigation, his distance from the staff, and his failure to focus on the truly anomalous, scientifically interesting cases. One paragraph of the seven-page letter quoted the August 9, 1966, trick memo. "I am rather puzzled by the viewpoints expressed there," McDonald said; "but I gather that they seem straightforward to you, else this part of the record would, presumably, not be available for inspection in the open Project files."

The letter came into Low's hands on February 5. To him nothing else mattered but that one paragraph. In a rage he went to Condon, who also blew up. The following morning, after threatening Saunders with professional ruination, Condon fired him. Levine was also sacked. Condon called the president of the University of Arizona and told him McDonald had "stolen" the memo. Then he wrote McDonald directly and accused him of treachery and disloyalty. He also wrote the Air Force to blast Levine, in an apparent effort to damage his security clearance.

On February 24 Mary Lou Armstrong, the assistant administrator, wrote a resignation letter to Condon. She said that "there is an almost unanimous 'lack of confidence' in [Low] as project coordinator and in his exercise of the power of that position." She and other staff members resented his effort to isolate them from such UFO authorities as Hynek, Vallee, McDonald, Hall, and others, even as Low freely consulted with anti-UFO scientists and solicited their ideas on how the final report should be written.

The conflict within the project was covered in the press and, in May, in the mass-circulation magazine *Look*, where John G. Fuller called the Condon Committee a "fiasco" and a "\$500,000 trick." (Midway through its operation the committee received additional funding that brought the total from the original \$313,000 to more than half a million dollars.) That same month the prominent astronomer Frank Drake wrote Seitz to urge that the committee be discredited. The General Accounting Office, the investigative arm of Congress, began making inquiries, and the university president and deans asked Condon for an explanation.

Meanwhile, as the chorus of criticism grew ever more deafening, NICAP announced the cessation of its association in an April 30 news conference at which copies of the Low memo were circulated. When *Science* reported the controversy in its July 26 issue, Condon resigned from the AAAS, *Science's* sponsor. He was also threatening to sue Saunders and Levine, who were returning the favor. In addition, Condon also hinted that he might seek legal action against *Look*. Nothing came of any of this, though Condon was forced to retract his more extreme characterizations of his antagonists. Late in the year Saunders and R. Roger Harkins's *UFOs? Yes!* told Saunders's side of the story.

By late spring, though embroiled in scandal, though without the services of some of its most knowledgeable personnel, the committee had finished the investigative phase of its operation. From then on, into the fall, the staff concentrated on writing and compiling the final report. In November the manuscript,



heavily padded with technical papers only marginally relevant to the ostensible subject of the larger report, was turned over to the NAS, headed by Condon's old friend and former student Frederick Seitz. The NAS review panel, consisting of 11 scientists (whose names McDonald had tried without success to get from Seitz in early 1967), gave the report its enthusiastic approval and backed all its conclusions and recommendations.

**Condon vs. the Condon Report.** "U.F.O. Finding: No Visits from Afar," the *New York Times* headline read on January 8. Under the headline was the by-line of science reporter Walter Sullivan. Sullivan wrote that the soon-to-be-released University of Colorado Project report would debunk the ETH and dismiss "demands of some scientists and laymen for a large-scale effort to determine the nature of such 'flying saucers'." Such a project, the report says in effect, would be a waste of time and money." Reviewing the project's history, Sullivan mentioned its critics, whom he characterized as "U.F.O. enthusiasts."

Sullivan was hardly an objective journalist but a partisan already engaged in spin control. Critics were charging that the report was damaged goods; the conflicts and controversies that had troubled the project were raising credibility problems that could be addressed only if the critics themselves were discredited. Though his *Times* article does not mention it, Sullivan had already written the introduction to the Bantam paperback edition (released that same week) of the committee report, formally titled *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects*. Its actual title and editor (medical journalist Daniel S. Gillmor) notwithstanding, the 965-page paperback—1485 in its Government Printing Office edition—would be called the Condon Report then and forever after.

In the introduction to the Bantam version, Sullivan offered a revisionist history of the project. As Sullivan told the story, Condon, a hard-headed but honest scientist, was unfairly set upon by UFO "buffs" (NICAP) and "disgruntled UFO believers" (Saunders and Levine). Keyhoe's interests, Sullivan implied, were purely monetary; "as author of *Flying Saucers Are Real*, [he] has a vested interest in the confirmation of his thesis." (In reality the book, a paperback published in 1950, had been out of print for more than a decade and a half.) Condon's love of crackpot stories did not reflect bias or contempt, according to Sullivan; these were just the sorts of tales that would naturally engage the attention of "a somewhat garrulous soul who loves to spin a good yarn."

From the critics' perspective, in the book as in his tenure as project head Condon put his conclusions before his evidence. Condon's "Conclusions and Recommendations" begins on page one and ends on page 50. The second paragraph, however, carries the punch line:

[T]he emphasis of this study has been on attempting to learn from UFO reports anything that could be considered as adding to scientific knowledge. Our general conclusion is that nothing has come from the study of UFOs in the past 21 years that has added to scientific knowledge.

Careful consideration of the record as it is available to us leads us to conclude that further extensive study of UFOs probably cannot be justified in the expectation that science will be advanced thereby.

These were the words nearly all popular media focused on, and that portion of the scientific press that had always been hostile to UFOs pronounced that the report had ended the UFO controversy, except of course (as *Nature* expressed it) to “the nuts [who] will be quite immune to its impact.” A *Science* editorial remarked that just as some people once saw ectoplasm as evidence for survival after death, so now “many present believers [in UFOs] will continue to believe for their own psychological reasons, which have nothing to do with science and the rules of evidence.” The traditionally UFOphobic *Time* sneered at the “saucer buffs” whose favorite theories the “Colorado investigation [has] destroyed . . . with simple, rational explanations.” Others compared UFO proponents to flat-earthers.

These sorts of outbursts reflected the degree to which, even among the educated elite, the subject of UFOs continued to generate emotions far in excess of what reason alone would explain. It was hard for many people, Condon and his apologists prominently among them, to concede that UFO reports might represent anything at all, least of all a subject worthy of unbiased investigation. Condon, who had had an unprecedented opportunity, blew it and took revenge on those brave or foolish enough to say as much. These included not only Saunders, Levine, and McDonald but Robert M. Wood, a McDonnell Douglas aerospace engineer who briefed the committee on October 13, 1967. Subsequently, Wood wrote Condon a critical but polite letter listing his concerns about project shortcomings. Later Wood learned that Condon contacted James S. McDonnell, CEO of the company Wood worked for, and tried to get him fired. Condon’s wrath even extended to Carl Sagan who, though a skeptic, was too soft on UFOs for Condon’s taste. In 1971 he considered blackballing Sagan from the prestigious Cosmos Club in Washington, DC.

Not all scientific journals joined in the UFO bashing. One immediate problem, as anyone who read beyond Condon’s introductory essay learned, was that of the 91 case histories the book covered, 30 remained unexplained. As McDonald among others would argue, even some of the “explained” cases seemed solved more by presumption than by the weight of evidence. But even if one agreed with every negative conclusion arrived at by every project analyst, one could still not get around the embarrassing fact that, as Hynek noted in a review published in *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, “the percentage of ‘unknowns’ in the Condon report appears to be even higher than in the Air Force investigation . . . which led to the Condon investigation in the first place.”

Scattered throughout the report are statements by investigators and analysts who explicitly acknowledge the potential existence of UFOs. Some examples: “The preponderance of evidence indicates the possibility of a genuine UFO in this case.” “The probability of at least one UFO involved appears to be fairly high.” “The



apparently rational, intelligent behavior of the UFO suggests a mechanical device of unknown origin as the most probable explanation of this sighting."

Critics such as Stanford University astrophysicist Peter A. Sturrock found that Condon's summaries of the different investigations were inaccurate, misleading, or false, or some combination thereof. For instance, Sturrock found "little relation between Hartmann's case studies and Hartmann's summary, on the one hand, and Condon's appraisal of UFO photographs, on the other hand." In addition to other errors, Condon indicated that Hartmann had solved all the photographic cases.

Elsewhere Condon gave the impression that Gordon David Thayer, who investigated radar cases for the project, had explained all such incidents as arising from anomalous propagation. In fact, Thayer had assigned such an explanation to only 19 of 35 cases and considered a few of the latter (such as the **Lakenheath/Bentwaters radar/visual case** and the **RB-47 radar/visual case**) extremely puzzling. Even Condon loyalist Roy Craig conceded the latter to be "inexplicable."

Sturrock wondered how the NAS panel could have given its stamp of approval to a report as flawed as Condon's. He could only conclude that it had read only Condon's conclusions, paid modest if any attention to the rest, and rushed to judgment. "Seven weeks is a very short time to digest a report on what was, to all of the panel members, an unfamiliar subject," he suggested.

The views of a UFO subcommittee convened by the American Institute for Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) came out of a much longer study of the Condon Report. The subcommittee, under the direction of Joachim P. Kuettner, consisted of scientists and engineers with no previous position on UFOs. The results of the subcommittee's inquiries were published nearly two years after the release of the Colorado study. In its November 1970 issue the AIAA journal *Astronautics and Aeronautics* carried a three-page statement by the subcommittee. The statement took note of the disparities between the summaries by Sullivan and Condon and the actual content of the report. The subcommittee remarked that a careful reading of the report would lead to a conclusion precisely opposite to Condon's. Far from discouraging further scientific inquiry into the UFO phenomenon, the report should encourage it.

Others held the same view. Aerospace scientist Robert M. L. Baker, Jr., wrote in *Scientific Research* (April 14, 1969) that the project had produced evidence that "seems to justify scientific investigation along many general and specialized frontiers." In *Physics Today* (December 1969) Gerald Rothberg, who had worked for the project in the summer of 1967, wrote that in this capacity he had personally investigated 100 sightings, three or four of which left him perplexed. Rothberg thought the "residue of unexplained reports" of sufficient potential importance to warrant recognition of the UFO phenomenon as a "legitimate scientific controversy."

As had been clear from the beginning, staff members and consultants—those, in other words, actively involved in research, investigation, and analysis—

were as a rule more inclined than Condon and Low to believe UFO reports to be worthy of scientific study. From internal memoranda and published statements of 16 project members, Michael Swords concluded that 11 favored scientific investigation of the phenomenon; in three cases it was not possible to assign a clear opinion on the question. Only Condon and Low unambiguously deemed serious UFO research beneath science's dignity.

**After the storm.** Speaking before the American Philosophical Society in April 1969, Condon characterized his critics as "flying saucer buffs who have been making money from sensational writing and lecturing to gullible audiences." He went on to urge that publishers and teachers who supported UFOs "be publicly horsewhipped, and forever banned from further activity in these usually honorable professions."

Condon managed to postpone, though not to cancel, a AAAS UFO symposium organized by Sagan and Thornton Page. Condon lobbied conservative scientists to his cause, even asking Vice President Spiro T. Agnew to do what he could to stop the symposium. But AAAS president (and old Condon friend) Walter Orr Roberts backed Sagan and Page. The symposium was held at the AAAS convention in Dallas on December 26 and 27, 1969 (see **American Association for the Advancement of Science UFO Symposium**).

On December 17 Air Force Secretary Robert C. Seamans, Jr., announced the long-anticipated closure of Project Blue Book. In his statement Seamans, using words that echoed Condon's, said Blue Book "cannot be justified either on the ground of national security or in the interest of science."

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Its many faults notwithstanding, the Condon Committee would be the last gasp of significantly funded UFO study in America for a long time to come. In Swords's assessment the Condon Report "had one serious lasting negative impact on the academic community. It demonstrated . . . that being sympathetic to UFOs was a very dangerous thing if one wished to flourish within the oft-closed corridors and minds of the Establishment."

Condon died in 1974, but five years earlier, in his review of the Condon Report, Hynek had looked ahead and predicted how the physicist would be remembered in the ages to come:

It is unfortunate that, almost certainly, popular history will henceforth link Dr. Condon's name with UFOs, and only the arcane history of physics will accord him his true place and record his brilliant career in contributing to the understanding . . . of the nature of the physical world. These contributions UFOs cannot take away from him, even though his work with this problem is analogous to that of a Mozart producing an uninspired pot-boiler, unworthy of his talents.

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As he drove on a highway seven miles north of Tremonton, Utah, at 11:10 a.m. on July 2, 1952, Delbert C. Newhouse, a U.S. Navy chief petty officer and experienced aerial photographer, heard his wife call his attention to something strange in the sky. One glance was sufficient to get him to pull the car to the side of the road.

Stepping outside, he watched 12 to 14 objects at what he estimated to be 10,000 feet. Looking like "two pie pans, one inverted on top of the other," they were clustered in a loose formation, "milling around." Newhouse took 1200 frames



of film (75 seconds' worth) through the telephoto lens of his 16-mm movie camera, though by the time he had it unpacked, the objects had receded even farther until they now were little more than shiny points of light. At one point a single object left the pack, heading east, and he held the camera still so that the UFO crossed the field of view. He repeated this procedure three or four times. After the last of these passes, the object disappeared in the east while the rest receded over the western horizon.

**Analyses.** The film was sent soon after to **Project Blue Book**, the Air Force's UFO-investigation agency, headquartered at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Dayton, Ohio. Blue Book's head, Capt. **Edward J. Ruppelt**, quickly informed Maj. Dewey Fournet, who served as Pentagon liaison officer for the project. Fournet arranged for the original to be shown to a group of high-ranking intelligence officers. Then it went to the Air Force's Photo-Reconnaissance Laboratory at Wright-Patterson.

A few weeks later the laboratory reported, according to Ruppelt, "We don't know what [the objects in the film] are but they aren't airplanes or balloons, and we don't think they are birds." A subsequent frame-by-frame analysis conducted at the U.S. Navy's Photo Interpretation Laboratory in Anacostia, Maryland, came to the conclusion that changes in the lights' intensity, among other things, eliminated the possibility that the images were aircraft or birds. To analysts Harry Woo and Lt. Robert S. Neasham, that left only one remaining option: that they were intelligently controlled vehicles of some kind. The implication, of course, was that these were extraterrestrial spacecraft.

But when they were shown the film on January 14, 1953, a group of scientists whom the Central Intelligence Agency had assembled to review the Air Force's UFO evidence felt otherwise. In their opinion the objects were sea gulls known to inhabit the Great Salt Lake area. Panel members shrugged off Newhouse's assertion that he had held the camera steady as one of the objects passed in front of it; perhaps Newhouse had panned the camera without realizing it. (This object's apparent speed—estimated at around 650 mph—had caused other analysts to reject the sea gull identification.) Moreover, Johns Hopkins University astronomer and panel member Thornton Page suggested, perhaps Woo and Neasham had not used the proper technique in measuring the images' brightness.

In 1955 Robert M. L. Baker, Jr., a computer and aeronautical scientist employed by Douglas Aircraft Company, was asked to analyze the film, which would be used the next year in a UFO docudrama produced by Greene-Rouse Motion Picture Studios. In the course of his work, which would lead him to the conclusion that the objects were unidentified, Baker interviewed Newhouse, who told him that as he stepped out of the car the objects were directly overhead; they were "gun metal colored objects shaped like two saucers, one inverted on top of the other."

After a reanalysis of the film in 1956, the Air Force endorsed the sea gull explanation. A decade later, after the Air Force asked the University of Colorado to conduct a purportedly independent review of the UFO evidence (see **University of**

**Colorado UFO Project**), University of Arizona astronomer William K. Hartmann studied the Utah film and identified the objects in it as sea gulls, partly on the basis of his own observations of such birds in Utah. He acknowledged that this interpretation was inconsistent with what Newhouse said he had seen of the objects before he began filming them. "I have been unable to find any record of these statements in the Blue Book file," Hartmann wrote. "Baker . . . indicates that the description in question was given in interviews about 1955. [Newhouse's] memory may have become 'set' by this time, or affected by events such as the witness's service as a NICAP advisor in the interim."

This is simply wrong. NICAP (**National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena**) did not exist in 1955—it was formed in late 1956—and Newhouse did not join its panel of "special advisers" until the next year. As to Newhouse's credibility and his failure to mention structured discs in what is recorded of his Blue Book testimony, Ruppelt has this to say:

After I got out of the Air Force I met Newhouse and talked to him for two hours. I've talked to many people who have reported UFOs, but few impressed me as much as Newhouse. I learned that when he and his family first saw the UFOs they were close to the car, much closer than when he took the movie. . . . He didn't just *think* the UFOs were disk-shaped; he *knew* that they were; he had plainly seen them. I asked him why he hadn't told this to the intelligence officer who interrogated him. He said that he had. Then I remembered that I'd sent the intelligence officer a list of questions I wanted Newhouse to answer. The question "What did the UFOs look like" wasn't one of them because when you have a picture of something you don't normally ask what it looks like.

At a December 1969 **American Association for the Advancement of Science UFO Symposium**, Baker took issue with Hartmann's analysis. He noted that the images'

motion is not what one would expect from a flock of soaring birds; there are erratic brightness fluctuations, but there is no indication of periodic decreases in brightness due to turning with the wind or flapping. No cumulus clouds are shown on the film that might betray the presence of a thermal updraft. . . . The motion pictures I have taken of birds at various distances have no similarity to the Utah film.

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## VALENSOLE CE2/CE3

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On several occasions during the last week of June 1965, Maurice Masse, who farmed just north of Valensole, in France's Basses Alps, discovered that someone was picking shoots from lavender plants in a field he worked each morning. The damage was minor but annoying. Masse hoped to catch whoever was responsible.

At 5:45 a.m. on July 1, Masse smoked a cigarette just prior to starting his tractor and getting on with the day's work. He was positioned next to a seven-foot-high rubble pile at the edge of a vineyard to his east; the lavender field lay to the south of the vineyard. A sudden whistling sound startled him, and he stepped out from behind the pile to detect its source.

Masse's first thought was that an aircraft had landed. An unusual-looking aircraft, to be sure, perhaps an experimental one. The size of a Dauphine automobile, shaped something like a rugby ball, it rested on four legs. In addition, it had a central pivot stuck in the ground. The object was some 200 feet away from him, in a spot in the lavender field on the south side of the vineyard. Some 70 feet of open space separated it from the vines. Near the object were two figures he would later compare in size and general outline to "boys of about eight years." As soon as he saw them, Masse would recall six weeks later,



I knew that it wasn't with men that I had to deal and I watched them the whole time as I was moving across [through the vineyard]. Both these beings were down on the ground. They were squatting down. One had his back to me and the other one was opposite him, and it seemed to me that they were looking at a lavender plant.

Masse crossed through the vineyard trying to keep himself concealed from the strangers. But even when it was no longer possible to hide his presence once he had stepped into the field, he continued on his way.

Now that he was in the open, the beings became aware of him. They stood up, and Masse got a good look at them from his vantage 15 or 20 feet away. They were dressed in gray-green overalls and had smooth, bald, pumpkinlike heads. Like the heads, the hands were bare but of more normal human appearance. Their eyes were large and slanted, their mouths lipless; the mouths resembled little holes more than anything else. The chins were small and pointed. The beings stood less than four feet tall. There were grunting sounds associated with them, as if they were speaking to one another, but the mouths did not move.

Masse would never discuss what happened immediately after that, except to insist that the entities were kindly disposed and "human," though not from the earth. Years of pleas and proddings from investigators would all be to no avail. Masse was determined not to talk. He has hinted only that there was some communication, apparently telepathic, between him and the beings.

Then one of them pointed a pencil-like object at him, and Masse found that he could not move. The being put the object into a case or holster on its left side.



Artist Michael Buhler's interpretation of farmer Maurice Masse's encounter with alien beings in Valensole, France, in 1965. (Fortean Picture Library)



(Each carried a small case on its left and a larger one on its right.) The two figures moved with surprising agility to their craft, which they entered through a sliding door. The UFO shot off with a whistling sound at enormous speed in a westerly direction and vanished within seconds. It took Masse 20 minutes, however, to regain full control of his body.

He went over to the spot where the UFO had rested. There were marks where the legs and pivot had connected with the ground.

Badly shaken, Masse decided to go to town and confide his experience to a friend who ran a cafe. The friend heard him out and did not doubt his word—Masse had a solid local reputation—but urged him to contact the authorities. Suddenly wishing he had said nothing about the experience, Masse blurted out that it was just a joke and they should both forget it. He left, and his friend, who did not believe that Masse had been anything less than wholly serious, began telling others about the strange event. Soon it would be widely known in the village and soon after that all over France. In short order he would be besieged by police investigators, reporters, and ufologists.

**Ground traces and other effects.** In the evening Masse returned to the site with his 18-year-old daughter. Now, as he looked over the traces, he noticed a change in the central hole, shaped like a reverse funnel. In the morning it had contained liquid mud; now that mud had hardened like cement. Masse kept his daughter from approaching too closely. He feared that the site might contain radiation or other dangerous energies. (Subsequent testing detected no such radiation.)

The following day a visitor described the site thus:

I was able to establish the existence, in a lavender field with light, freshly hoed soil, of some strange and more recent marks. These consisted of a shallow basin about 1 meter 20 in diameter, in the center of which there was a cylindrical-shaped hole 18 cms. in diameter and 40 cms. deep. Also to be seen were four shallow grooves, each 8 cms. in diameter and approximately 2 meters long, which formed a sort of cross having the cylindrical hole as its center. The earth at this spot was densely packed.

Three days after the encounter, Masse began to suffer a huge loss of energy. He slept 12 to 14 hours on the first day. The next day he slept nearly 24 hours and probably would have slept more if his concerned family had not awakened him and insisted that he eat. After some weeks he resumed his pre-encounter sleep patterns.

On August 8 one of France's leading ufologists, Aimé Michel, interviewed Masse and studied the site. He observed that "the traces of the lavender are visible for a good hundred meters or so along the take-off trajectory, as far as a little shanty . . . towards Manosque, and even beyond. These traces are: a degeneration of the young shoots prior to July 1, which are going dry and falling off, and a singular vitality of the shoots after July 1."



Under a microscope, Michel found, each plant showed

one or two sprigs (sometimes more) that are desiccated, exactly similar, so far as one can see, to twigs that have been dried naturally by great heat or by the autumn. These twigs crumble to dust between the fingers. On August 8 such plants as these, with desiccated twigs, were found over a distance of about 100 meters *beneath* the trajectory of the alleged take-off. The non-desiccated twigs (of these plants that had the desiccated twigs) showed nothing particular. This phenomenon of desiccation could be seen over a width of 2 or 3 meters.

Unfortunately, so far as is known no laboratory analysis of the traces was ever conducted. Thus what may have been significant evidence of a UFO event would never be properly documented.

On August 21, 1967, Michel and *Flying Saucer Review* editor Charles Bowen interviewed Masse. Masse's serenity was in stark contrast to his evident distress of two years earlier, when Michel had last seen him. Masse had long since plowed under the imprint marks; yet clear evidence of the earlier event remained. At the landing site, "a circular area of land in the midst of the precise rows of lavender plants," only a few weeds grew. "The area is about 3 yards in diameter," the investigators wrote, "and around the perimeter a number of lavender plants are stunted and withered-looking. They are certainly not healthy plants like those in the rest of the field."

In November 1968 French astrophysicist Pierre Guérin easily located the site, now overgrown with weeds but still devoid of lavender plants. The spot was still discernible on a later visit, in March 1969. During that same visit Guérin interviewed Mme. Masse at her home while her husband was off at work. According to her, her husband thought of his visitors daily, considered his encounter with them a spiritual experience, and wanted to keep the hallowed ground where they had landed in the family forever. At the same time he endeavored to mislead outsiders into believing he was no longer interested in his UFO experience.

Jacques Vallee, a French-American author of several UFO books, met with Masse in Valensole in May 1979. Masse said he had seen the object, though apparently not its occupants, on at least one other occasion. He denied that the July 1965 incident had any religious implications, but he said experiences like his should not be discussed with anyone, even one's family. Masse stayed out of the limelight and occupied himself with his farm work and various charitable activities. Vallee remarked that it was "clear Masse has never told the entire truth about his experience."

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## VALENTICH DISAPPEARANCE

# VALENTICH DISAPPEARANCE

On Saturday, October 21, 1978, twenty-year-old Frederick Valentich left Moorabbin airport in Victoria, Australia, and flew over Bass Strait on his way to King Island. He was in a single-engine Cessna 182 airplane. The flight was to take less than 70 minutes.

Just after 7 p.m. he spotted what he took to be another aircraft passing uncomfortably close to his and then hovering over it. Valentich's Cessna began to experience engine trouble. At 7:06 he radioed Melbourne Air Flight Service and spoke with controller Steve Robey. The following exchange, slightly abridged, ensued:

*Valentich:* Is there any known traffic below five thousand [feet]?

*Robey:* No known traffic.

*V:* I am—seems [to] be a large aircraft below five thousand.

*R:* What type of aircraft is it?

*V:* I cannot affirm. It [has] four bright, it seems to me like landing lights. . . . The aircraft has just passed over me at least a thousand feet above.

*R:* Roger, and it is a large aircraft? Confirm.

*V:* Er, unknown due to the speed it's traveling. Is there any Air Force aircraft in the vicinity?

*R:* No known aircraft in the vicinity.

*V:* It's approaching now from due east towards me. . . . [Brief silence.] It seems to me that he's playing some sort of game. He's flying over me two to three times . . . at speeds I could not identify.



R: Roger. What is your actual level?

V: My level is four and a half thousand. Four five zero zero.

R: Confirm that you cannot identify the aircraft.

V: Affirmative.

R: Roger. Stand by.

V: It's not an aircraft. It is— [brief silence].

R: Can you describe the, er, aircraft?

V: As it's flying past, it's a long shape. [Brief silence.] [Cannot] identify more than [that it has such speed]. [Brief silence.] [It is] before me right now, Melbourne.

R: And how large would the, er, object be?

V: It seems like it's stationary. What I'm doing right now is orbiting, and the thing is just orbiting on top of me. Also it's got a green light and sort of metallic. It's shiny [on] the outside. [Brief silence.] It's just vanished. . . . Would you know what kind of aircraft I've got? Is it military aircraft?

R: Confirm that the, er, aircraft just vanished.

V: Say again.

R: Is the aircraft still with you?

V: [Brief silence.] Approaching from the southwest. . . . The engine is rough idling. I've got it set at twenty three twenty four, and the thing is [coughing].

R: Roger. What are your intentions?

V: My intentions are, ah, to go to King Island. Ah, Melbourne, that strange aircraft is hovering on top of me again. [Brief silence.] It is hovering, and it's not an aircraft.

Seventeen seconds of open mike followed. No voice was discernible; there was only a loud, metallic scraping sound. That was the last message anyone would ever hear from Fred Valentich.

**Searches and theories.** When the Cessna (apparently about 70 kilometers north-northwest of King Island at the moment of the last transmission) failed to arrive at its intended destination at the scheduled time of arrival, 7:28, light aircraft began a visual and radio search but found nothing. Conditions at the time were clear, with a mild northwesterly breeze accompanied by unlimited visibility. The Cessna was equipped with a life jacket and a radio survival beacon. Nothing had been heard from the beacon.

The Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Orion, a long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft sent from Edinburgh, South Australia, conducted a tracking crawl following the course taken by Valentich's Cessna and continued searching all day Sunday. The only thing found that day was an oil slick some 18 miles north of King Island. On Monday the search continued, and ships were dispatched to sample the slick to determine whether it consisted of oil or aviation fuel. (Laboratory analysis suggested it was "marine diesel" rather than aviation fuel.) Items first thought to be debris turned out to be packing cases and plastic bags floating in the sea.

There were other searches before the effort was called off on the twenty-fifth, but no trace of Valentich or his plane would ever be found. The incident attracted worldwide publicity and generated numerous rumors and speculations of which the most obvious—that he encountered a UFO that snatched up him and his plane—was only one of many. The controversy would continue for years even in the absence of further information that could have shed light on the incident.

On December 9, 1980, the *Melbourne Herald* interviewed the only "witness." Radio operator Robey discounted theories that Valentich had been disoriented or, as some speculators intimated, faked his disappearance. He also recalled "this open microphone, with just this metal pinging sound, like someone rapidly pushing the press-to-talk button. . . . It started for five to six seconds, then broke briefly and started up again."

Later, American scientist/ufologist Richard F. Haines acquired a copy of the pilot's conversation from Guido Valentich, Fred's father. The elder Valentich had acquired his copy directly from the Department of Aviation, which supplied it for humanitarian reasons but in confidence. The original tape was erased and reused by Melbourne Flight Service. A spokesman for the Bureau of Air Safety Investigation claimed in a letter to one inquirer that no further copies of the tape existed.

In a paper published in *Journal of UFO Studies* in 1983, Dr. Haines pointed out that in the 17-second period of "metallic" noises, containing "36 separate bursts with fairly constant start and stop pulses bounding each one, there are no discernible patterns in time or frequency as to these bursts." Haines concluded that the effect was similar to that produced by rapid keying of the microphone, but he added that control tests using the same technique were noticeably different from the original sound.

In May 1982 the Bureau of Air Safety Investigation, operating within the Australian Department of Aviation, released an official report on the incident. That report—an Aircraft Accident Investigation Summary Report—was made available "only to parties having a bona fide interest in the occurrence." Its conclusions:

Location of occurrence: not known.

Time: not known.

Degree of injury: presumed fatal.



Opinion as to cause: The reason for the disappearance of the aircraft has not been determined.

Apart from an early attempt to suggest that Valentich may have been flying upside down, totally disoriented, with lighthouse lights producing his perception of an "unidentified aircraft," the Department of Aviation would never officially address the question of what Valentich may have been observing prior to his disappearance.

When ufologist Bill Chalker pressed the issue, at first Assistant Secretary (Air Safety Investigation) G. V. Hughes purported not to understand what Chalker meant by the expression "stimulus for Valentich's apparent UFO observation." He then wrote:

[A] great deal of consideration has been given to what Mr. Valentich might have been looking at when he described his observations. A considerable number of suggestions have been put forward by persons inside and outside this Department. All have been examined. The Department is not aware of any other official body having undertaken such an investigation into this occurrence. . . .

As you correctly state . . . the RAAF is responsible for the investigation of reports concerning "UFO" sightings, and liaison was established with the RAAF on these aspects of the investigation. The decision as to whether or not the "UFO" report is to be investigated rests with the RAAF and not with this Department.

In 1982, over four separate visits comprising six days, Chalker was given access to the RAAF UFO files in Canberra. He examined what was represented as every UFO-related document the Directorate of Air Force Intelligence (DAFI) had in its possession. He found nothing on the Valentich case. The DAFI Intelligence Liaison Officer told him that the RAAF had not investigated the incident because the Department of Aviation had not asked it to do so. The RAAF professed to see it as an "air accident/air safety" matter, the officer said; he then expressed his private view that Valentich had crashed after he became disoriented.

In November 1982 Chalker secured official permission to examine the Department of Aviation UFO files but was specifically denied access to the Valentich files on the ground that they were Air Accident Investigation files and not UFO files. As Air Safety's G. V. Hughes explained:

The file concerning this occurrence is no more or less restricted than any other accident investigation file.

As a signatory to the International Convention on Civil Aviation, we subscribe to the Standards and Recommended Practices contained in Annex 13 to the Convention, in respect of aircraft accident investigation, specifically, when it is considered that the disclosure of records, for purposes other than accident prevention, might have an adverse

effect on the availability of information in that or any future investigation, such records are considered privileged.

**UFO or no?** While in Melbourne examining the Aviation Department's UFO files, Chalker had a lengthy discussion with A. Woodward, who signed the official Aircraft Accident Summary Report. He reiterated the official department line and stressed that the matter was being treated only as an "air accident" investigation. He cited a long list of prosaic explanations, ranging from disorientation and suicide to the unlikely notion that a meteorite had struck the airplane. In the end, however, he conceded that no certain answer was available.

Some of the more grandiose theories about Valentich's fate were promulgated by a self-styled "anti-UFO crusader" named Harley Klauer, a retired radio engineer. In Australia's *People* magazine (September 3, 1980) Klauer offered not one but two explanations: (1) Valentich had been brought down by drug runners or (2) an electrical discharge from a lenticular cloud with a UFO-like appearance zapped the Cessna.

Concerning the first, Klauer contended that drug smugglers used Bass Strait to bring drugs into Australia; they employed big helium-filled balloons with nylon fishing lines, from which the drugs could be hung, floating two or three above the water, towed by a power boat. If apprehended, the smugglers could cut the line and let the evidence float away. Klauer suggested an invisible nylon line in just such an operation could have struck the wing of Valentich's Cessna. The balloon became the UFO, and the line would have pulled down the aircraft out of control in much the same way barrage balloons acted in World War II. After the plane crash, Klauer asserted, the power-boat crew located the wreckage by radar, picked it up, or made sure that anything floating sank without a trace.

In his second scenario Klauer noted that at sunset on the evening Valentich disappeared, he saw in the southwest sky, from Seaforth, a line of lenticular clouds stretching into the horizon in the direction of Cape Otway—Valentich's last land call. Klauer suggested that Valentich could have fallen victim to a sudden electrical discharge from one of these clouds.

Subsequently, in another publication, *On Parade*, Klauer abandoned drug smugglers. Now, he declared, he had direct evidence from a series of photographs taken of the sunset at Cape Otway on October 21, 1978, by Roy Manifold. As Klauer told it, "by a staggering fluke [Manifold] caught the actual explosion of the aircraft on film." One of the Manifold photos showed a strange shape above the water. A previous photo in the series depicted what appeared to be something in the water beneath the position of the "aerial artifact." Some researchers speculated that the photo series showed a UFO coming out of the water—indeed, perhaps the same UFO that they suspected swallowed up Valentich. But Klauer wrote that his analysis of the photos indicated that the plane wreckage was located 11 kilometers southwest of Cape Otway Lighthouse. To explain why the plane was photographed exploding,



Klauer suggested that either a spark from a loose or frayed engine lead ignited gas fumes or an electrical discharge from one of his lenticular clouds blew up the craft.

Klauer's theories do not merit serious consideration. To start with, the Manifold photos were taken of a sunset that occurred at 6:43. Valentich's last transmission was at 7:14. As for Klauer's stormy discharging lenticular clouds, the weather conditions at Cape Otway at the time of the incident were clear, with 35-kilometer visibility, calm winds, and smooth seas.

The Manifold photos were analyzed by an American group, Ground Saucer Watch, which after subjecting them to a computer-enhancement technique concluded that "the images represent a bona fide unknown flying object of moderate dimensions, apparently surrounded by a cloudlike vapor/exhaust residue."

In December 1982 and January 1983 the Australian press trumpeted a story that claimed Valentich's plane had been found. The source was Ron Cameron, an independent film producer at work on a Valentich documentary. Cameron said two divers had approached him to say they had uncovered the wreckage, then missing for four years.

According to Cameron, the two divers said they had stumbled across two aircraft during a salvage search for a boat that had gone down in the area. These two aircraft ostensibly had crashed for prosaic reasons, but Cameron encouraged the divers to look further for the missing Valentich plane. Within two weeks, they claimed, the Cessna was located. In all four light aircraft allegedly were found resting within relatively short distances of each other in a boomerang pattern, near ridges on the sea bed off Cape Otway.

The divers claimed they had 16 photos of the plane wreck and offered them to Cameron, along with the plane's position, for \$10,000. Cameron balked at this offer in the absence of any authentication but tried to keep negotiations going along lines more congenial to his interests. The divers showed him five photos said to show a Cessna, with correct identification marks, largely intact except for a bend in the fuselage. The divers reported finding no body inside the plane.

As Cameron contemplated a salvage operation, he heard from the Department of Aviation (DoA), which stated it had to be involved in such activity; after all, the aircraft was still the subject of an open air-accident investigation. It added, however, that it wanted to keep a low profile. A meeting was arranged, but in the wake of growing publicity, the DoA shied away, fearing a media circus. The divers also backed away from Cameron, after complaining that statements he had made in a radio broadcast indicated he had doubts about their honesty. Cameron would claim he assured the divers that he had implied no such thing, but soon the divers and Cameron were out of communication. Later, when he tried to contact them, he could not find them.

**UFO activity around Bass Strait.** If Frederick Valentich saw a UFO on October 21, he was not the only one to do so. A number of seemingly credible sightings in the

general vicinity of Bass Strait offer circumstantial evidence for a UFO link in the disappearance. Some examples:

Currie, King Island, 2 p.m.: From her backyard a young woman saw a white spherical object one-quarter the apparent size of the moon. It was moving west toward the sea when it stopped and hovered for a brief period before reversing direction. It was visible for 10 minutes.

Corio, Victoria, 3 p.m.: Two objects shaped like twin cigars passed slowly from west to east over tennis and cricket courts. In each case the two objects, silvery in color and slightly smaller than a jumbo jet, were linked by two silver pipes. They made no sound. Numerous witnesses observed their passage.

Cape Otway, Victoria, 4:15 p.m.: A woman and her son saw two cigar-shaped objects, one slightly behind the other, come in silently and slowly from the southwest. They maintained an exact distance from each other. Suddenly the silvery UFOs turned white, executed a sweeping northern curve, and shot off.

Altona (western suburb of Melbourne), 6:50 p.m.: A round object three times the apparent size of Venus flashed beams of light toward the ground. The witnesses, a doctor and his wife, watched it for five minutes.

Frankston (southern suburb), 7:10 p.m.: A number of observers watched an object glowing red, pink, and white in the southeast sky. Its apparent size was a quarter that of the moon.

Brooklyn (western suburb), 7:10 p.m.: A starfish-shaped object with green flickering lights on one end passed over the Melbourne-Geelong road.

Elwood (southern suburb), 7:15 p.m.: A cab driver and his passenger saw a red object moving south to west over the bay. It looked like nothing either had ever seen before.

Ringwood (eastern suburb), 8 p.m.: A starfish-shaped object was seen heading in a northeast direction, then disappearing behind a grove of tall pine trees. It emitted a low pulsating hum. Two of the witnesses reported interference on their walkie-talkies and associated it with the object's presence.

Batesmans Bay, 8:15 p.m.: A bright white object performed "impossible acrobatics" for five minutes, then headed off in the direction of Sydney.

There were other sightings that evening as well. More took place in the days and weeks ahead before subsiding in January 1979. —*Bill Chalker*

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## VALLEE, JACQUES FRANCIS.

→ See Paranormal and Occult Theories about UFOs and Psychosocial Hypothesis.

## VAN TASSEL, GEORGE W. (1910-1978)

Born in Jefferson, Ohio, on March 12, 1910, George Van Tassel developed an early interest in aviation. In 1930 he moved to California, where for the next 11 years he worked for Douglas Aircraft. In 1941 he became the personal flight inspector of experimental aircraft for Howard Hughes, and two years later he went to work for Lockheed as a flight inspector on Constellation aircraft.

In 1947 Van Tassel and his wife and three daughters left Los Angeles and moved south into the high desert between Yucca Valley and Joshua Tree, California. Amid the 2600 acres he leased from the U.S. government was a seven-story boulder, called simply Giant Rock. In the early 1930s a friend of Van Tassel's, Frank Critzer, had blasted out living quarters in the part of the rock that lay under the desert surface. He lived there until 1942 when in the course of an altercation with three local deputy sheriffs he was blown to pieces with his own dynamite. When the Van Tassels moved into these quarters five years later, they were barely livable, but Van Tassel installed electricity and in other ways made their situation comfortable. In due course he opened a restaurant, an airport, and a dude ranch.

Beginning in early 1952, Van Tassel claimed, he received psychic messages from a variety of extraterrestrial starship ("ventla") commanders. The first of these, received on January 6, was from "Lutbunn, senior in command first wave, planet patrol, realms of Schare [pronounced Share-ee, a saucer station in space]. We have your contact aboard 80,000 feet above this place." Other messages soon came from Elcar, Clota, Totalmon, Latamarx, Noma, Leektow, Luu, Oblow, Kerrull, Locktopar, Molca, Clatu, Hulda, Lata, Singba, and others. One of Van Tassel's contacts, Ashtar ("commandant quadra sector, patrol station Schare, all projections, all waves"), was to become a metaphysical superstar, and in the years ahead many **contactees**

would channel communications from him. These beings sought to raise humanity's "vibratory attunement" so that earthlings will not threaten the wise and peace-loving space people. The operation was being run out of the Council of Seven Lights on the planet Shanchea.

Van Tassel reprinted many of the messages in a misleadingly titled book, *I Rode a Flying Saucer!* (1952), one of the first post-1947 contactee works. In early 1953 he began holding weekly Friday-night channeling sessions at Giant Rock, and in the spring he hosted the first of many annual Giant Rock Interplanetary Spacecraft Conventions, with guest appearances by other members of southern California's emerging contactee community. On August 24 Van Tassel got to step, for the first time, inside a flying saucer, when an extraterrestrial named Solganda roused the heretofore-only-psychic contactee from slumber and led him to a waiting ship. Solganda and the three other crew members gave him a tour of the interior before dropping him off and shooting back into space.

Soon the space people were imparting plans for an electrical rejuvenation machine that would be called the Integratron, and shortly thereafter, in public appearances and in the pages of the *Proceedings* of the College of Universal Wisdom, Van Tassel was raising funds for its construction. He said that when the machine was ready, it could rejuvenate as many as 10,000 persons a day. Their bodies would not outwardly return to youth, but the cells would be recharged. By 1959 a four-story domed structure, 55 feet in diameter, was in place, having been built mostly of wood and without nails, screws, iron, or steel.

In the course of its construction, Van Tassel discovered that the Integratron functioned also as a time machine. Strange images and television signals from other times appeared inside. (Van Tassel explained how this happened: The "time reference is a third dimension in electronics. You see, electronics has never had anything but a two dimensional science. The electronic flow of the magnetic pattern, perpendicular to it are the only two planes of reference they've ever had. And the time zone is perpendicular to both of them.") The Integratron was still uncompleted at the time of Van Tassel's death.

Van Tassel was a major, perhaps *the* major, promoter of other contactees. The Giant Rock gatherings gave many their first significant public platforms. In 1956, in radio and television appearances Van Tassel introduced New Jersey's Howard Menger, who would turn out to be one of the most prominent (and controversial) of the 1950s contactees, to the world.

On encountering him, the anti-contactee Civilian Saucer Intelligence of New York noted:

Mr. Van Tassel turns out to be a handsome, broad-faced, fair-haired man in his early forties, with a pleasant, deep voice and an easy-going manner of speech. It is impossible not to be struck at once by his evident "sincerity". . . . A person listening primarily to the *sound* of his discourse,

VAN TASSEL,  
GEORGE W.  
(1910-1978)



and applying little thought to its *sense*, would probably never have reason to suspect that this big, sincere, affable, humble man was anything other than what he claims to be. . . . [Yet] he endorses everyone else's stories no matter how questionable they appear to others.

Van Tassel died suddenly of a heart attack at 3:30 a.m. on February 9, 1978, in Santa Ana, California. In 1979, unable to pay a hefty tax bill, his widow Dorris sold the property to a San Diego real estate developer who then let it be known that he planned to turn the Integratron into a disco. Outraged, Van Tassel's followers raised money to buy the land back in 1981. The Integratron, however, remains unfinished. In the late 1980s it was purchased by Emile Canning.

From time to time, contactees report channeled messages from Van Tassel. On September 24, 1984, Thelma B. Turrell (better known by her pseudonym Tuella), a longtime communicant with Ashtar, was surprised when her etheric friend introduced her to Van Tassel, who had this to say of his post-mortem fate:

Since coming, or rather, returning here to "home base," it has been a rejuvenating time of blessed constant activity for the good of the Light, especially for the planet earth. I was immediately taken into fellowship with the Great Masters of the Council of which I wrote, and allowed to enter into all of its activities and discussions. This activity still continues.

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VILLAS-BOAS  
CE3

## VEHICLE INTERFERENCE AND UFOS.

→ See Close Encounters of the Second Kind; Loch Raven Dam CE2; Oz Factor; and Socorro CE2/CE3.

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## VILLAS-BOAS CE3.

→ See Sex and UFOs.





# W

## WALTON ABDUCTION CASE

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Few abduction reports have generated so much controversy as an incident that began on Wednesday, November 5, 1975, in a remote area of east-central Arizona. More than two decades later the dispute still rages. To all but a very few combatants the stakes seem high. If Travis Walton and other participants are telling the truth, so it is assumed, UFOs exist; UFO **abductions** are physical, not imaginary, events; and UFOs are piloted by extraterrestrial beings. By now, after years of wildly conflicting claims and charges, a mass of confusion surrounds the episode. Thus the sorting of the reasonable conclusion from the unreasonable inference, much less the certifiably true from the undeniably false, is no simple task. It is not, however, entirely impossible.

**The disappearance.** Travis Walton, 22, worked on a wood-cutting crew in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, set in a high mountainous area 15 miles south of Heber. The crew's foreman, Mike Rogers, had contracted with the U.S. Forest Service to thin out 1277 acres of scrub brush at Turkey Springs. Besides Walton and Rogers, the crew consisted of Ken Peterson, John Goulette, Steve Pierce, Allen Dalis, and Dwayne Smith. All were young men, ranging from 17 (Pierce) to 28 (Rogers). All lived in Snowflake, a small Mormon town 33 miles east of Heber.



Rogers had been doing contract work for the Forest Service for nine years. The Turkey Springs contract was the most lucrative he had landed so far, but he was late in fulfilling it. He already had secured one extension, and he and his crew were working hard and long to catch up. Thus the men labored until after sunset. When they quit for the day at 6 p.m., darkness had begun to fall.

Ten minutes later the exhausted workers piled into their battered pickup to begin the return trip to Snowflake. Rogers, Walton, and Peterson, the three non-smokers, sat in the front seat, the others in the back. As Rogers drove, Walton sat by the right window as the vehicle negotiated what passed for a road. It had gone no more than 200 yards before something unusual came into view.

It was a glow shining through the trees on the right, about a hundred yards ahead of them. As the truck drove up a hill, the men fell silent. Forty yards away, the light bled over the road, but a dense stand of trees still obscured its source. Then they passed a small clearing to their right, and the source was now clearly in view. It was a luminous, disc-shaped structure, hovering 15 to 20 feet above a slash pile and casting a milky yellow glow through all of the clearing. Approximately 100 feet from them, 20 feet wide and eight feet high, it was divided by dark silver vertical lines, longer than they were wide, into panel-like geometrical forms on its surface. A thin band with an outer protruding ring encircled the middle.

Rogers was bringing the truck to a stop when Walton jumped out and walked briskly toward the UFO. Later he would explain his action thus: "I was suddenly seized with the urgency to see the craft at close range. I was afraid the thing would fly away and I would miss the chance of a lifetime to satisfy my curiosity about it." When his co-workers saw what he was doing, they shouted at him to get back. Walton paused for a moment, then proceeded.

In short order he was standing on the perimeter of the dim halo of light the object was casting on the ground. He was only six feet away from being directly underneath the object. Mesmerized by the "unbelievably smooth, unblemished surface of the curving hull," he at first did not realize that the UFO was beginning to emit sounds. The men in the truck were hearing low beeps. Then Walton heard them, too, only they were mixed somehow with a distant rumbling, like a "multitude of turbine generators starting up." The UFO started to wobble slowly, one side tipped toward him. Then it wobbled faster, and the sounds grew louder.

By now thoroughly shaken, he ducked down behind a log that was jutting from the slash pile. He had to get away. He rose to his feet, and just as he was turning away from the UFO and toward the truck, he felt a "numbing shock . . . like a high voltage electrocution." It hit particularly in his head and chest, but he could feel it all over his body. He heard a cracking or popping sound, and then he heard, saw, and felt no more.

Those looking on saw a bluish green beam strike Travis. He rose a foot into the air, his arms and legs outstretched, and shot stiffly back some 10 feet, all the

while caught in the glow of the light. His right shoulder hit the earth, and his body sprawled limply over the ground.

Terrified, the others fled the scene. Rogers was driving dangerously fast, though he could barely see the road; he was certain that the object was coming up behind him. A quarter of a mile later, he swerved to avoid hitting a pine tree. The truck slid sideways and stopped, stuck crossways in a bulldozed pile of hard dirt.

Rogers looked around and saw that the UFO was gone. The sky was quiet and empty of anything but stars. No one spoke for some moments. Then everyone began to talk at once. Peterson and Rogers argued that they should go back to rescue Walton. At first the others rejected the idea, but over the next few minutes, as they began to calm down, they changed their minds. As they piled back into the truck, Rogers thought he saw a white streak ascending into the air. No one else saw it, but then none had been looking in that direction at that moment. Rogers believed he had witnessed the departure of the UFO.

Rogers drove around in the gathering darkness in search of the spot where they had seen the UFO. When they found it a few minutes later, Rogers drove into it. His headlights revealed nothing except the slash pile their companion had been standing beside. He shined a flashlight through the clearing. Then he stepped out of the cab, and his crew reluctantly followed. The panic they had suffered had made them feel almost physically ill.

Twenty minutes of searching came to nothing. As the enormity of the evening's strange events began to sink in, some of the men, including Rogers, who considered Walton his best friend, wept. When they pulled themselves together, they headed for Heber and the initiation of the police investigation.

**Five days.** The authorities first heard of the incident just after 7:30, when Navajo County Deputy Sheriff Chuck Ellison took a call from Ken Peterson, who said only that one of the crew was missing. Ellison met the group at a Heber shopping center. The men were in a highly emotional state. Two were crying. Even as they related the bizarre and unbelievable UFO story, Ellison could not help reflecting that if they were acting, they were awfully good at it.

Ellison quickly notified Sheriff Marlin Gillespie, who ordered him to wait with the crew until he could get to Heber. Gillespie was in Holbrook 40 miles to the north. Within the hour he and Undersheriff Ken Coplan arrived and commenced their own interview of the witnesses. Rogers, who wanted to get back to the site as quickly as possible, urged the sheriff's men to bring bloodhounds to aid in the tracking, but none were available. Pierce, Smith, and Goulette said they had no desire to return, and so they went off in Rogers's truck to Snowflake to notify Rogers's wife of what had happened.

At the site the six men stalked the clearing and surrounding area with flashlights and a searchlight mounted atop a four-wheel-drive jeep. The understandably suspicious law-enforcement officers focused a good part of their attention on the



trail that would have led Walton from the pickup to the slash pile. There were no prints in the hard ground. The pine needles that covered the clearing floor looked undisturbed. There were no broken twigs. There were no burn marks or other unusual effects in the slash pile or in the trees—nothing, in short, to back up the story.

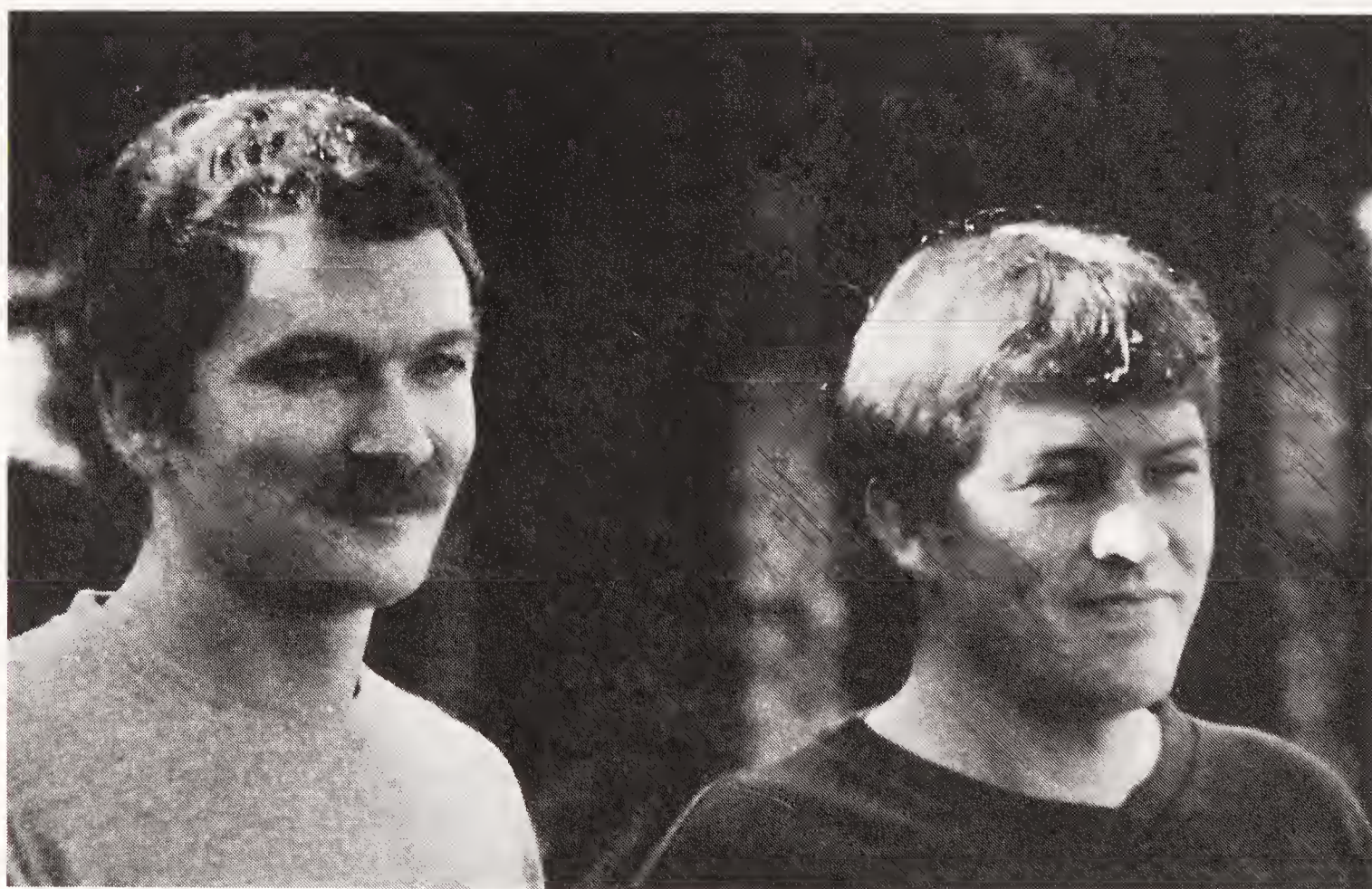
When last seen, Walton had been wearing no more than a light jacket. As the evening progressed, the temperature plummeted. If Walton was somewhere out in the woods, the bitter cold could represent a direct threat to his life. Ellison went back to Heber to collect more searchers, but even with the additional manpower the mystery of Walton's whereabouts remained unresolved.

Finally around midnight Rogers remarked that Travis's mother, Mary Walton Kellett, ought to be notified. She was staying in a remote cabin on a ranch in Bear Springs, 10 miles in the woods to the east. (Kellett lived there part of the year and spent winters at her home in Snowflake. She was shortly to return to town.) Rogers and Undersheriff Coplan set off to see her. They showed up at her door around 1 a.m. Mrs. Kellett knew Rogers, of course, but had not met Coplan before now.

Still visibly shaken, Rogers related the circumstances of her son's disappearance. Apparently not quite comprehending what he was telling her, Kellett asked him to repeat the story. Then, after some moments' pause, she asked him if he had told anyone else.

Coplan, who had expected Kellett to respond more dramatically, did not like the way she was acting, and he—as well as later critics of the case—would make much of Kellett's apparent composure, interpreting it as evidence that as a party to

The story of UFO abductee Travis Walton, left, with witness Mike Rogers, sparked intense media coverage and controversy. (Fortean Picture Library)





a **hoax** she knew her son was all right and hidden away somewhere. In fact, those who knew Kellett far better than Coplan would insist that a hard life—she had raised six children on her own under difficult economic circumstances—had long since taught her not to fly to pieces in the face of crises and tragedies. It was part of her personal code not to display emotion before strangers. Yet in the days ahead, as events overwhelmed her, she would show emotion before friends, acquaintances, and strangers alike—a fact that would go unmentioned in debunking treatments of the Walton episode.

At 3 a.m. Kellett called Duane Walton, the second oldest of the Walton sons and the one who, owing to strength of personality, typically took charge when circumstances called for it. Duane left his home in Glendale, a western suburb of Phoenix, almost immediately.

By morning yet more volunteers had joined the search. The three crew members who had stayed away the night before had not returned in the morning, so again only Rogers, Peterson, and Dalis participated in the renewed effort. Already the sheriff's men and other area police officers were entertaining dark suspicions that the UFO tale was a story concocted to cover something more sinister, such as murder. But at the same time Mike Rogers, who presumably would have been in on this hypothetical murder plot, was as insistent as Duane Walton, who presumably would not have been, that the search be continued. The two of them showed up together at Sheriff Gillespie's office on Saturday in an explosively angry mood. They had just been to the site, they said, and had detected not a soul. The search resumed that afternoon. This time it included a helicopter, riders on horseback, and four-wheel-drive jeeps.

That day also brought the outside world into this obscure corner of America. Along with hordes of reporters and curiosity-seekers, UFO investigator Fred Sylvanus showed up, sought out Mike Rogers, and interviewed him in the late afternoon and early evening. Duane Walton, who sat in on the interview, repeatedly interjected with comments of his own. These comments would come back to haunt him and to take a permanent place in the controversy surrounding the case. Duane claimed to have seen a UFO "almost identical to what they described, for a period of about 30 minutes, in broad daylight, about 12 years ago." He went on to assert, "Travis and I discussed this many, many times at great length. . . . We both said that we would immediately get as directly under the object as was physically possible. . . . The opportunity would be too great to pass up, and at any cost, except death, we were to make contact with them. . . . [Travis] performed just as we said we would . . . and he's received the benefits for it." Not nearly so sure, Rogers said, "You hope he has." Duane said he was sure his brother would be brought back because "they don't kill people." He and Mike denied, however, that they were UFO buffs. "I follow it like I do a lot of other things," Duane said.

Later in the interview Rogers expressed concern about another sort of problem: "This contract that we have is seriously behind schedule. In fact, Monday [November 10] the time is up. We haven't done any work on it since Wednesday



because of this thing; therefore, it won't be done. I hope they take that into account, this problem." He then returned to a prominent theme in the interview: his frustration with what he saw as a less than adequate search for his missing friend. Duane also complained bitterly about the lackadaisical nature of the search.

It certainly seemed, Sylvanus thought, as if the two were genuinely concerned about Travis. Yet at the same time Duane's remarks about UFOs and the intentions of their occupants made him uneasy; so did Mike's expressed concerns about the lateness of his Forest Service contract. As would soon become clear, the foundations for an alternative interpretation of the case had been laid.

Meanwhile, Snowflake Town Marshal Sanford (Sank) Flake was telling the press of his certainty that the story was a hoax "staged by Travis and his brother Duane to make some money. I believe the other kids did see something, but they were hoaxed, too." The Walton brothers, he said, had "lit up a balloon and launched it at the appropriate time." Flake's wife dissented: "Your idea is just as farfetched as Duane Walton's." Marshal Flake had a longstanding grievance against the Walton family stemming from a dispute with Travis some years earlier, and he had no specific evidence to support his charge, though he was poking around the Bear Springs ranch where he suspected Travis was hiding. On one occasion he brought a London television crew with him to the site, presumably so that it could film the live capture.

Flake was not the only officer hoping to crack the case by breaking down one of the supposed conspirators. Some officers made repeated visits to Kellett's house to interrogate her at length. Finally one evening Duane arrived from the sheriff's office at Holbrook, where he had sat in on yet another interview of the six witnesses. His mother was crying as an oblivious deputy kept plying her with questions. Furious, Duane marched him to the porch and told him not to return unless or until he really had something to talk about. Then Duane told his mother that from now on she should not allow investigators into the house; she should talk with them on the porch, which would allow her to end the discussion any time she wanted to.

The next morning Marshal Flake showed up to deliver a message. Because Kellett had no phone, all communications between her and the authorities had to be carried out in person. Kellett stepped out to the porch, closed the door behind her, took the message, and went back inside. Flake and other skeptics would later conclude that she was hiding something. Or someone.

On Monday morning Rogers and the crew met in Holbrook to undergo polygraph testing at the sheriff's office. The examiner, Cy Gilson, worked for the Arizona Department of Public Safety and had been brought up from Phoenix for the occasion. While reporters milled around outside, each of the witnesses underwent four 20-minute tests that consisted of variously phrased versions of four basic questions:

(1) Did you cause Travis Walton any serious physical harm last Wednesday afternoon?

(2) Do you know if Travis Walton was physically injured by some other member of your work crew last Wednesday?

(3) Do you know if Travis Walton's body is buried or hidden somewhere in the Turkey Springs area?

(4) Did you tell the truth about actually seeing a UFO last Wednesday when Travis Walton disappeared?

One of the variants of this last question was, Do you believe that Travis Walton was actually taken aboard a UFO last Wednesday?

In his official report Gilson wrote:

Each of the six men answered "No" to questions #1, 2 and 3, and they each answered "Yes" to question #4. The test results were conclusive on Goulette, Smith, Peterson, Rogers, and Pierce. The test results on Dalis were inconclusive.

Based on the polygraph chart tracing, it is the opinion of this examiner that Goulette, Smith, Peterson, Rogers, and Pierce were being truthful when they answered these relevant questions.

These polygraph examinations prove that these five men did see some object that they believe to be a UFO, and that Travis Walton was not injured or murdered by any of these men on that Wednesday. If an actual UFO did not exist and the UFO is a man-made hoax, five of these men hid no prior knowledge of a hoax. No such determination can be made of the sixth man, whose test results were inconclusive.

Even Flake did not make much of Dalis's test results. Dalis, after all, was a man with much to hide: a criminal past and (as we shall see) a criminal future. He had behaved with hostility all through the polygraph process, as if fearing secrets he had every reason not to wish revealed would accidentally come to light. Flake remarked, "I wouldn't trust him as far as I could throw him. Since he's the only one who didn't pass the lie test, I'd almost have to believe the opposite with him. Not passing means he's probably telling the truth. He saw it, the UFO." After the test Sheriff Gillespie pronounced himself satisfied. "There's no doubt they're telling the truth," he said. "I feel sure that all six of them saw a UFO."

Close to midnight a phone rang in Taylor, a small town two or three miles south of Snowflake and 30 miles east of Heber. When Grant Neff took the call, he heard a faint, confused-sounding voice mutter, "This is Travis. I'm in a phone booth at the Heber gas station, and I need help. Come and get me."

Neff, who was married to Travis's sister Allison, told the caller he had the wrong number. The voice did not sound like Travis's, and the Waltons and their relatives already had been subjected to too many prank and crank calls. But just as he was preparing to hang up, Neff heard the voice screaming. The hysteria sounded genuine. "It's me, Grant," the caller said. "I'm hurt, and I need help badly. You come and get me."

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It was Travis, all right. Neff promised to get Duane and to be in Heber as soon as possible.

**The reappearance.** Neff drove to Snowflake and picked up Duane, who had not left the sheriff's office until 10 that evening. From there Duane had gone to Snowflake and to his mother's house. The two were talking when a white-faced Neff walked in and broke the news.

Grant Neff and Duane Walton found Travis hunched over in the second of three phone booths at a service station on Heber's outskirts. Though conscious, he seemed to be in shock. He had five days' worth of beard on his face, and he looked thinner than he had been when last seen. Clothed in the levi shirt and jeans and cotton shirt he had been wearing at the time of his disappearance, he was shivering in the 18-degree cold.

On the way back to Snowflake, Travis spoke vaguely of encountering creatures with eyes that had terrified him. He was still frightened. He was startled to hear that five days had passed; he thought it had been only a couple of hours. He shook his head and ceased speaking altogether.

At his mother's house he took a bath and drank quantities of water. When he tried to eat cottage cheese and pecan cookies, he threw up.

Duane decided that someone in his brother's fragile condition needed to be shielded, at least for now, from harassment by police officers, journalists, and busy-bodies. Travis himself was saying over and over again, "Don't let the police know I'm here. . . . I've got to have a doctor. . . . Don't let the police know. . . . Get me some medical help."

But the police already knew, or at least suspected, that something was up. At 2:30 a.m. Gillespie got a tip from a phone company informant that someone had called the Neffs from the Heber gas-station booth. Gillespie alerted Deputy Ellison and Lt. E. M. Romo, who went to the station and began to dust for prints. There were no prints at all on the phone in the third booth, perhaps because no one had used it since the serviceman had emptied the till and wiped the instrument clean. The other two had prints, but so far as Ellison and Romo could determine in the cold and dark, none was Walton's.

Meanwhile, officers on duty in the early-morning hours were looking for cars owned by Walton family members. Deputy Glen Flake (Sanford Flake's brother), who had been positioned in Snowflake at the junction of Highways 77 and 277 so that he could see Walton vehicles heading to or from Taylor (on 77) or Heber (on 277), saw nothing. In due course the sheriff told him to drive over to Mary Kellett's house.

Travis was there, but Deputy Flake would not know that till later. When he pulled up, he observed lights on inside the house. Duane was in the front yard siphoning gas from a friend's truck. He explained that he had driven from Holbrook too late to refill his tank for the trip back to Glendale. He did not add that Travis would be accompanying him there, and Flake asked no further questions. Not long

after he left, Duane left with Travis. By the time they got to Phoenix, the Walton abduction case would be in danger of collapsing into farce.

**Travails and tests.** Among the ufologists whom Duane Walton met prior to his brother's return was a Phoenix man named William H. Spaulding, head of Ground Saucer Watch (GSW). A frequent lecturer at UFO conventions, Spaulding specialized in photoanalysis; he claimed to have developed a computer-enhancement technique by which he could distinguish phony and authentic UFO photographs with something approaching certainty.

During Travis's absence Spaulding had introduced himself to Duane, and the two had spoken at length. Spaulding boasted that as a scientific organization GSW had access to all kinds of professionals, including physicians. The Waltons, who had the good fortune of being healthy and the bad luck of being poor, had no family doctor. But Duane knew that Travis would require medical attention on his return (assuming he did return). Spaulding assured him that GSW had a local physician who could take care of Travis and perform "all the scientific testing he'll need."

On his arrival in Phoenix, Duane called Spaulding, who directed him to GSW's medical consultant, Dr. Lester Steward. He and Duane would meet him at his office at 9 a.m. Duane and Travis then went to sleep at the former's Glendale residence, awakening just after 9. They hurried to Steward's office, which they were disconcerted to learn was located in a rundown hotel not far from the airport. The office looked as seedy as its surroundings. Worse, the room was devoid of medical equipment and textbooks. Even more ominously, the sign on the door identified Steward simply as "Hypnotherapist."

Duane immediately wanted to know if Steward was a medical doctor. At first he insisted he was, then eventually admitted that he was not licensed to practice in Arizona. (A subsequent inquiry determined that Steward's degree was from a California-based correspondence school without academic accreditation.) He said he would call a doctor friend and arrange for a full physical examination, but his "friend"—so Duane and Travis judged from hearing Steward's side of the conversation—did not appear to know who he was.

The Waltons walked out soon afterwards. The amount of time they spent in Steward's office itself became a part of the controversy. Steward and Spaulding would assert that the brothers had been there for two hours, during which Steward questioned them thoroughly. This is certainly false. The Waltons showed up half an hour late for their appointment; afterwards they went out to eat in a nearby restaurant before driving on to Glendale. At 10:45 Duane took a call from another ufologist, Coral Lorenzen of the Tucson-based **Aerial Phenomena Research Organization** (APRO). Thus the time with Steward probably did not exceed 45 minutes.

By the time they got back to Duane's, the two learned that the world now knew about Travis's return—till then a secret known only to the family, Spaulding, and Steward. In their absence Duane's girlfriend Carol had been fielding phone calls from reporters. On their return both Spaulding and Steward called, but Duane blunt-



ly informed them that they should bother them no more. This action, as the Waltons soon found out, made Spaulding—who till now had been telling the press of his confidence in the case—a sworn enemy and the source of much future trouble. Other inquirers were told that Travis had gone to a private hospital in Tucson and could not be reached.

Nonetheless, Mrs. Lorenzen managed to get through when she phoned. She spoke with Duane and managed to persuade him that she could arrange for an examination by local physicians—*real* ones. So at 3:30 that afternoon Duane and Travis met two Phoenix APRO members, Drs. Joseph Saults (a general practitioner) and Howard Kandell (a pediatrician), at Duane's home.

This was well and good—the first step toward a real investigation—but between Lorenzen's call and the physicians' examination another party would enter, and hugely complicate, the story. At noon Lorenzen heard from the *National Enquirer*. In exchange for APRO's cooperation and access to the Waltons, the tabloid offered to pay all expenses. To start with, it would pay for a hotel room in which the brothers could be sequestered; it would also dispatch a team of reporters to the scene. Since APRO could not match the *Enquirer's* financial resources, Lorenzen agreed.

Travis's examination went well. Saults and Kandell found that he was in good health. There were only two out-of-the-ordinary physiological symptoms. As Kandell, who wrote the medical report, would note:

There were no bruises or evidence of trauma, except for a two-mm red spot in the crease of his right elbow, which was suggestive of a needle puncture; however, it was not overlying any significant blood vessel. He denied being aware of its presence and did not know what it might be due to. . . .

Urinalysis—volume 560 cc; normal, with good concentration [SpG 1.032]; however, there was no acetone present, which is unusual, considering that any person who is without adequate nutrition for twenty-four to forty-eight hours will break down his own body-fat stores, which should result in ketones [acetones] being excreted into the urine. The absence of ketones in his urine, considering a ten-pound weight loss, is difficult to explain.

Duane had given the doctors a bottle of urine—the product of Travis's first post-return micturition; early on Spaulding had urged Duane to make sure such a sample was preserved. Of course there was no way to prove this was Travis's specimen. The physicians had to take the brothers' word for it.

Travis would speculate that the red spot was something he had picked up in the course of his work, perhaps from a thorny bush. On the other hand, as we shall soon see, some critics would charge that the mark was evidence that Travis had injected drugs, probably LSD, into his right elbow. This latter theory is hardly

plausible. Possibly more difficult to explain is the absence of bruises, which one might expect in the wake of Travis's alleged beam-driven collision with the ground. (Walton, once an amateur boxer, would offer this explanation: "I've taken numerous hard blows in sparring matches which never left a bruise. All the guys on the crew have had limbs and small trees fall on them in the course of a workday, leaving no bruises. It can take a lot to bruise a healthy, fit young man. It's unlikely that landing after being thrown ten feet would be sufficient to cause a mark which would last five days, especially through a work shirt and denim jacket.")

In the meantime Duane was maintaining the pretense that his brother was hospitalized in Tucson. He told this untruth—or, as he thought of it, cover story—not only to press inquirers but to Sheriff Gillespie, who had learned of Travis's return only through media accounts. On Tuesday, however, he found out that Travis was staying with Duane near Phoenix. He drove to Glendale and confronted Duane and Travis near midnight.

Gillespie listened as an exhausted Travis related what little he remembered of what happened after he awoke in a hospital-like setting inside what he assumed was an alien spacecraft. After hearing him out, the sheriff wondered aloud if Travis had not been hit with a club or baseball bat, then drugged and taken to an earthly hospital. Travis disagreed, pointing out that the physical tests he had just undergone had detected no trace of drugs or bumps on his head. The incident had occurred just as he said it had, and he would take a lie-detector test to prove it. Duane added that Travis would take any kind of test, not just polygraph but truth serum, voice stress analysis, or hypnosis, to prove that he was telling the truth. Gillespie said a polygraph test would do.

By the next day, Wednesday, November 12, Spaulding was being quoted in the press as saying that he and his group had found unspecified "holes in this story." Spaulding, who had directed the Waltons to "Dr." Steward, also stressed that the investigation required more than anything "competent scientific personnel conducting scientific tests." Later that day he told reporters, "We're going to blow this story out today."

On Thursday, Travis and Duane slipped away to nearby Scottsdale, where the *National Enquirer* had a room at the Sheraton Hotel waiting for them. There they met APRO scientific consultant James A. Harder, a professor of engineering at the University of California at Berkeley. Harder, who had a particular interest in hypnotizing UFO witnesses, soon regressed Travis, who proceeded to tell for the first time all that had happened, or supposedly happened, aboard the UFO. Heretofore he had been reluctant to discuss it and had given it out piecemeal even to his brother. Unlike many other abductees, however, Walton's conscious recall and unconscious "memory" were the same, and he could account for only a maximum of two hours, and perhaps even less, of his missing five days. Curiously, during a particularly deep part of the hypnosis, Walton encountered an impenetrable mental block and expressed the view that he would "die" if the regression continued. "Dr. Harder could not precisely determine whether the block is an actual



warning . . . or only a false threat designed to discourage efforts at uncovering blocked memories," Walton would write years later. (The onboard experience will be discussed later.)

Sheriff Gillespie had arranged for polygraph examinations for Travis and Duane, to be administered by Cy Gilson, the same man who had tested the logging team earlier in the week. All concerned agreed that it must be done in secrecy, to eliminate the media circus that had afflicted the previous polygraph episode. Unfortunately, someone leaked news of the intended examination. On Friday morning, as the sheriff left his office, he saw clear signs that reporters were following him. Around that time a reporter phoned Duane's house and wanted to know when Duane and Travis planned to go to Holbrook for the test. When Duane heard about the call, he exploded. He cancelled the test and accused the sheriff—who was in fact as innocent as the Waltons themselves—of bad faith.

At this stage everybody's nerves were on edge. The Waltons also were upset at the many rumors and accusations in circulation. Some of these saw print. The next day, Saturday the fifteenth, the *Phoenix Gazette* ran an uncritical piece on "Dr. Lester H. Steward, director of the Modern Hypnosis Instruction Center." After spending "two hours with Walton and his brother Duane," the article reported, Steward stated, "He [Travis] was out hallucinating on some drug, probably LSD." He further claimed that the Waltons had come on like a couple of freeloaders who wanted a physical examination without having to pay for it; yet when he arranged for just such an exam, the two young men fled his office. The article went on to recite other false and dubious allegations:

Steward said Duane Walton called him Tuesday about regressive hypnosis [not true]. . . . The hypnosis never came off [it was never asked for], Steward said, and he believes the reason is that the Waltons fear exposure.

Steward challenged the alleged infallibility of the lie-detector tests. . . . Five reportedly passed, but Steward said he would be unconvinced that they were telling the truth unless they went through regressive hypnosis [as, in fact, Travis Walton already had].

"The polygraph is only a machine, and I think they got together and beat it," he said. "But they can't beat hypnosis. If they did go into hypnosis, they can lie, but I can show they are lying, and they can't control it. [Nothing in the professional literature of hypnosis substantiates these claims. Lies told under hypnosis are indistinguishable from truths.]

"They're afraid of the tests," he added [without evidence].

He said that Travis appeared upset at first, but he was completely calm when the two brothers left, and Steward described that reaction as symptomatic of drug use.

These were extraordinarily irresponsible charges. To start with, no evidence whatever existed to support the allegation that Travis was under the influence of drugs at any time. According to all available testimony, not just Travis's but other people's, Travis so opposed drug use that he did not consume alcohol or even coffee. True, he had taken drugs in the past, in common with many other young people of the period, but he had stopped doing so two years previously. Whatever one makes of the UFO claim, the drug accusation was and remains a canard, though would-be debunkers would keep it alive for years to come.

The *National Enquirer* wanted Travis to take a polygraph examination as soon as possible, while it still had him available and before another publication was able to scoop it. Harder thought Travis was still too nervous and distraught to take a test that, strictly speaking, measured stress, not lies. Travis might or might not be lying (though Harder was convinced of his truthfulness), but there could be no question that he was exhibiting plenty of stress. Three psychiatrists who had been brought into the case concurred, insisting that any results would have no meaning. One psychiatrist, Jean Rosenbaum, spoke with particular authority here; he was a court-accepted expert on polygraph use.

But the *Enquirer* persisted. A positive polygraph result would bolster the impact of its story; besides, reporter Paul Jenkins argued, the results would not be released without Travis's permission. Travis finally consented, and APRO director Jim Lorenzen (Coral's husband) contacted John J. McCarthy, director of the Phoenix-based Arizona Polygraph Laboratory. McCarthy said he would be willing to administer the test. When Harder expressed concern about Travis's emotional state, McCarthy assured him that he would take it into account.

Unfortunately, when they met in the Waltons's room at the Sheraton, McCarthy did nothing to reassure Travis. Instead, in the pre-trial interview McCarthy got Travis to admit to two episodes about which he was deeply ashamed: his past drug use and a 1971 scrape with the law. In the latter instance he and Charles Rogers (Mike Rogers's younger brother) had pled guilty to the theft of blank payroll checks that they had cashed using a forged signature. Apprehended almost immediately, they were given two years' probation and ordered to repay the stolen money. That was the beginning and end of Travis's criminal history. Not even Sank Flake, who did not like Travis and openly accused him of hoaxing the UFO story, deemed this anything other than a youthful mistake, but it was deeply embarrassing to have to admit to it, and Travis talked about it only on the understanding that the matter would be kept confidential.

Yet McCarthy, whose sarcastic and abrasive remarks betrayed his skepticism, went out of his way to remind Travis of the incident a few minutes later. After McCarthy had used the word "collusion" and Travis admitted that he did not know the word, McCarthy snapped, "That means acting in concert with somebody else, one or more people to perpetrate a hoax, acting in collusion with somebody else,



you know, to set this thing up. Just like you acted in collusion with this friend of yours to burglarize the office, steal the checks, and forge them, right?"

A few minutes later McCarthy announced, "Travis, your responses are deceptive," and declared that he had failed the polygraph test. Flabbergasted, Travis protested, "There must be some mistake." He asked for another test. McCarthy refused. "There's no need to go any further," he said. "I've got my answers."

McCarthy concluded his official report thus:

His reactions on the control test were normal. He appeared to be lucid, and prior to testing he stated that he understood each of the questions to be asked and that he would answer each with a "Yes" or "No." It was obvious during the examination that he was deliberately attempting to distort his respiration pattern.

Based on his reactions on all charts, it is the opinion of this examiner that Walton, in concert with others, is attempting to perpetrate a UFO hoax, and that he has not been on any spacecraft.

Duane expressed his enormous displeasure with the results to McCarthy. The psychiatrists reiterated their conviction that under the circumstances the results meant nothing. Dr. Rosenbaum spoke for his colleagues in a formal statement:

[O]ur conclusion, which was absolute, is that this young man is not lying, that there is no collusion involved. The full test results show that he really believes these things, that he is not lying. He really believes that he was abducted by a UFO.

It was apparent to just about everybody except McCarthy that the polygraph test had been a bad idea. Then the Waltons, *National Enquirer*, McCarthy, and APRO signed on to another bad idea: they agreed to keep the test and its results confidential. Hardly anyone else would hear of the incident until eight months later, when the Walton case's most intense and persistent critic exposed it to the world.

On February 7, 1976, Duane took a polygraph test administered by George J. Pfiefer, Jr., of Tom Ezell and Associates. Travis hoped to be there as well, but APRO had not made an appointment for him because he was having car trouble and it was by no means certain that he would be able to negotiate the 160 miles between Snowflake and Phoenix. But as it happened, Travis made it. He asked if he could take the test after Duane was through. Drs. Harold Cahn and R. Leo Sprinkle and APRO director Jim Lorenzen drew up a list of questions, and later Travis added some others. Travis wanted the test to cover other accusations that had been leveled at him.

Pfieffer concluded as follows:

[I]t is the opinion of this examiner that Duane Walton has answered all questions truthfully according to what he believes to be the truth regarding this incident, and he has not attempted to be deceptive in any area. . . .

After a careful analysis of the polygrams produced, there are no areas left unresolved, and it is the opinion of this examiner that Travis Walton has answered all questions in a manner that he himself is firmly convinced to be truth regarding the incident commencing 11-5-75.

Pfiefer also conducted a polygraph examination on Mary Kellett. Those who thought Travis's disappearance had been staged suspected that his mother would almost certainly know of the hoax; some speculated that he had hidden in her Bear Springs cabin. So Pfiefer asked her if she had participated in a hoax, if she had concealed Travis, and if she knew where Travis was between November 5 and 10. She answered no to these questions. Pfiefer also wanted to know if she believed Travis was telling the truth. She said yes. Pfiefer wrote:

After a very careful analysis of the polygrams produced and comparing the polygram tracings with the Known Lie pattern, it is the opinion of this examiner that Mrs. Mary Kellett has answered all the questions truthfully according to the best of her knowledge and beliefs.

In 1992 Pfiefer affirmed his confidence in these conclusions.

**The controversy.** Even in the absence of clear evidence of a hoax—as well as in ignorance of the suppressed McCarthy test—Spaulding continued his assault on the case. Some UFO groups were willing to take Spaulding at his word. The **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP) inaccurately characterized the incident as a “contactee case,” complained about the “undue excitement and interest” it had generated, and remarked that “either a hoax has been committed or . . . a psychological phenomena [sic] is involved.” APRO's treatment, the most comprehensive, was the only wholly positive one; though it made much of the Pfiefer tests, it failed to mention the failed examination with McCarthy.

So did the *National Enquirer* in its December 16, 1975, issue, even though its reporters had privately voiced their disenchantment with the case to the Lorenzens a day after the McCarthy examination. One of them, Jeff Wells, prepared a 16-page memorandum urging that the story be killed. Unlike McCarthy, the reporters did not believe Travis had perpetrated a hoax; they were persuaded by Dr. Rosenbaum that he had had a psychological experience. As Wells recalled in 1981, “He had seen something out there in the woods, some kind of an eerie light that had triggered a powerful hallucination that might recur at any time.”

A far more formidable attack on the case was launched by Philip J. Klass in June 1976. Klass issued 17 pages' worth of accusations against virtually everyone—investigator, polygraph examiner, and alleged witness—who in one way or another supported the case. A ferocious UFO debunker who seldom hesitated to hurl hoax charges against witnesses ordinarily deemed reliable (including police officers and members of the clergy), Klass approached the Walton episode less as an investigator than as a prosecutor.



His most damaging revelation concerned the McCarthy examination and APRO's role in covering it up. Jim Lorenzen would subsequently defend his organization's actions, saying that the results were meaningless—probably true, but hardly the point. Klass got the story from McCarthy, who had decided to speak out because of the continuing attention Walton's claims were receiving. (In July Travis and the six witnesses would split a \$5000 award from the *National Enquirer* after its Blue Ribbon Panel on Unidentified Flying Objects judged the case the most important UFO event of 1975.) He also learned from McCarthy of Travis's past drug use and run-in with the law. Klass used these, along with the claims of Lester Steward (charitably referred to as a "psychologist and hypnotist whose Ph.D. is from a small private school in Southern California"), to charge that Travis was befuddled with drugs, possibly from "LSD injected into the spot where the puncture mark was found." Readers of Klass's paper could only conclude that Travis was a substance abuser and a criminal.

Drawing liberally on speculation, the darkest possible interpretation of every remark and action, and regular use of capital letters, bold type, italics, and underlined sentences (and sometimes combinations thereof), Klass told a complex tale of deceit, conspiracy, and incompetence. He portrayed the Waltons as UFO buffs who seemed oddly unconcerned by Travis's disappearance. To get around the positive polygraph results, Klass argued that McCarthy's experience and qualifications were greater than Gilson's and Pfiefer's; moreover, Travis had "dictated" the questions Pfiefer had asked him.

The November 10 Gilson examination of the crew members proved nothing, according to Klass, except that the loggers had not murdered Travis. The one UFO-related question, Klass wrote, went, "Did you tell the truth about actually seeing a UFO last Wednesday when Travis Walton disappeared?" Klass noted, "The question did not ask whether they saw Travis being 'zapped' by a UFO, nor whether they really believed that Travis had been abducted by a UFO." He then made this rather strange observation:

Celestial bodies are sometimes mistaken for UFOs. At the time of the Walton incident, the planet Jupiter was very bright in the early evening sky and would have been visible at 6:15 p.m. This is *not* to suggest that Rogers and his crew honestly imagined that Travis had been "zapped" by Jupiter. But if they were all partners in a prearranged hoax, all might be able to answer "yes" to this one UFO-related question without displaying overt signs of telling a significant falsehood.

Such strained conjecture did little to advance Klass's argument. It was, moreover, unfair to inflate Travis's youthful troubles into evidence of a continuing pattern of criminal behavior, including substance abuse. Of this charge Lorenzen said, "The arresting officer [in the forgery episode] will write Travis a letter of recommendation and the people that he robbed will do the same." No area law-enforcement people considered Travis a criminal.

It was not true that Travis had “dictated” the polygraph questions to Pfiefer, Lorenzen would argue. Pfiefer himself would characterize the verb as less than accurate; “suggest” would be closer to the truth. In any event, as Klass neglected to mention, the questions Travis wanted asked were potentially damaging ones if he was trying to perpetrate a hoax. In suggesting them, Travis was trying to address the accusations made against him, never imagining that his action would be turned into yet another accusation against him.

No one denied that the Waltons had discussed UFOs in the past. In common with a number of area residents, including Sheriff Gillespie, both Duane and his mother claimed to have seen them (Duane reporting a **close encounter**, Kellett distant lights). By Duane’s own testimony he and his brother had talked about the prospect of entering a UFO. It is not unreasonable to incorporate these elements into a hypothesis that sees the Waltons therefore as logical suspects in a flying-saucer hoax. To call them UFO buffs, however, is to overstate the case. They were not consumers of UFO literature, and Travis had never heard of **J. Allen Hynek**, Northwestern University astronomer, former **Project Blue Book** consultant, and then the world’s most famous UFO investigator. Travis learned of him only when Hynek proposed a meeting. Travis refused, thinking that Hynek was someone associated with Spaulding’s group.

Duane maintained that his repeated talk of Travis’s return, including his insistence that his brother was safe with the UFO people, was done to reassure his mother and himself. Here, of course, we have to take his word for it, and Klass was not the only critic to wonder.

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In Klass’s rendering of the incident, the witnesses had a strong financial motive for perpetrating a hoax. Mike Rogers was far behind on the timber-trimming operation for which he had contracted with the Forest Service. The completion date on the original contract, awarded June 26, 1974, was for the summer of 1975. Rogers managed to get an 84-day extension, and the new deadline was November 10, 1975. But as that date neared, he realized that he was still nowhere near completion. The Forest Service withheld 10 percent of its payment on the contract until the job was finished. As Klass had it, Rogers knew that he was risking that penalty, which he could ill afford, and so he decided to make use of the “Act of God” clause in the contract. Thus the “UFO abduction” came at a convenient time for him. On November 18 he wrote the Forest Service to explain that he could not complete his contract because the UFO incident “caused me to lose my crew and [made] it difficult to get any of them back on the job site.”

This claim, seemingly plausible, was repeated in subsequent Klass white papers and in two books he would write years later. It would be accepted as a reasonable explanation even by some UFO proponents. It is, however, almost certainly false.

To start with, the seven crew members were unlikely conspirators in a scheme to commit what amounted to fraud against the federal government.



Rogers's men were all temporary employees, picked up for the specific job and paid by the hour. Only Travis and Mike Rogers could be called close friends. Dwayne Smith barely knew the other crew members; the incident took place on his third day on the job. Later, when Allen Dalis, by all accounts the least-liked member of the crew (and thus arguably the one most likely to inform on his fellows), fell afoul of the law, he confessed to crimes with which the authorities had not thought to link him; yet he resolutely insisted that the UFO story was true. One individual, never publicly identified, offered money—\$10,000, according to one account—to crew member Steve Pierce if he would admit that the incident was a hoax. He refused. In the early 1990s the Walton story was back in the news because a feature film had been made about it; if any of the presumed conspirators had wanted to sell an exposé to a tabloid newspaper, he certainly could have done so—and no doubt laid claim to a sizeable check. None did so.

Moreover, as the *A.P.R.O. Bulletin* observed:

The facts are that Rogers was behind on the contract in question since he had been working on three other contracts simultaneously. He had collected on the other contracts and therefore was not in financial trouble.

Also, it was to his advantage and to the advantage of the crew to work as long as possible on the contract. Rogers knew from experience that a small time overrun would be tolerated provided they were making good progress. In addition, a contract could be defaulted without serious penalty or prejudice without going to all the trouble of creating an excuse. Rogers knew this because he had defaulted a contract a few years earlier.

Rogers had requested an inspection from the Forest Service to take place on November 7th, which would enable him to collect for the past three weeks' work. The UFO incident prevented the inspection and held up monies already earned.

APRO pointed out that Rogers had not mentioned UFOs as the reason for his not being able to complete the contract on time. Rogers's failure to finish the job in the required period caused no serious difficulty with the Forest Service; not long afterwards Rogers was awarded another contract with it. This time, however, he used a two-man machine and no longer needed a six-man crew. After a while Rogers rehired Travis Walton. The other five who had comprised the original crew were left out in the proverbial cold. "Are we to believe," APRO asked, "that [the] men who perpetrated a hoax for Rogers's benefit are now going to remain silent while Rogers collects the best acreage rate he has ever received without them?"

No one connected with the contract took Klass's theory seriously. Maurice Marchbanks and Junior Williams, the Forest Service officers who contracted with Rogers, rejected the idea as absurd. So did Sheriff Gillespie. And so did journalist

Bill Barry, who extensively investigated all aspects of the Walton story as he gathered material for a popular magazine article and then a book. Yet Klass persisted, and the notion that the Walton case was a hoax cooked up to excuse an overdue contract entered the folklore of ufology.

In 1993 Arizona ufologist Jim Speiser, at that point no partisan of either side in the debate, conducted his own inquiries. After examining contract documents, he discovered that Rogers had not drawn on the "Act of God" clause to get out of the contract. "The words 'Act of God' were never mentioned by him, by Marchbanks, or by anyone in connection with the default of his contract," Speiser wrote. He observed:

Throughout my conversations with Rogers it became clear that an in-depth knowledge of Forest Service contracting practices would be necessary for anyone to evaluate Klass' argumentation[,] and that it would be a simple matter for Klass to exploit this complexity, knowing full well that the casual reader would be hard put to distinguish what passes for in-depth research from what is really half-knowledgeable sophistry. Indeed, Klass' behavior is not unlike [that of] a shrewd prosecutor, familiar with all aspects of the case, but sifting through the clues for the elements that would present the defendant—Rogers—in the worst light.

**Aboard.** Nearly lost in the complicated human saga that the Walton episode quickly became was Travis's account of what he claimed happened to him during his disappearance. Real or imagined, the story is relatively sedate and simple compared to some other abduction claims of the period. If not for the circumstance that initiated the episode, if not for the undeniable fact of Travis's mysterious absence for five days—if, in other words, like most other abduction reports it was simply an anecdote told by one person and unrelated to anything verifiable—it would not be nearly so well known as it is. As folklorist Thomas E. Bullard, a scholar of the **abduction phenomenon**, puts it, "As abduction stories go, the Walton case was neither lengthy nor complex, but the literature of charges, countercharges and explanations arising out of the investigation has outgrown the literature describing the incident itself."

Yet Travis's story is interesting in its own right. Part of that interest lies, for all its simplicity, in its eerie and otherworldly quality. More important, it anticipates aspects of the abduction phenomenon, just beginning to come into prominence in the mid-1970s, which were then obscure or unknown altogether.

As the story he would relate consistently over the years went, he returned to consciousness in a hospital-like room. His whole body ached, his vision was blurred, and he felt weak and thirsty. Above him a luminous rectangle, three feet by one and a half and composed of seamless metal, gave off a soft white glow. A plastic device extended from his armpits to his rib cage and curved around his chest. The air was wet and heavy, and he had some difficulty breathing it. Still, his



first impression was that he was in a conventional earthly hospital, even if he could not understand why the nurses had not removed his clothing.

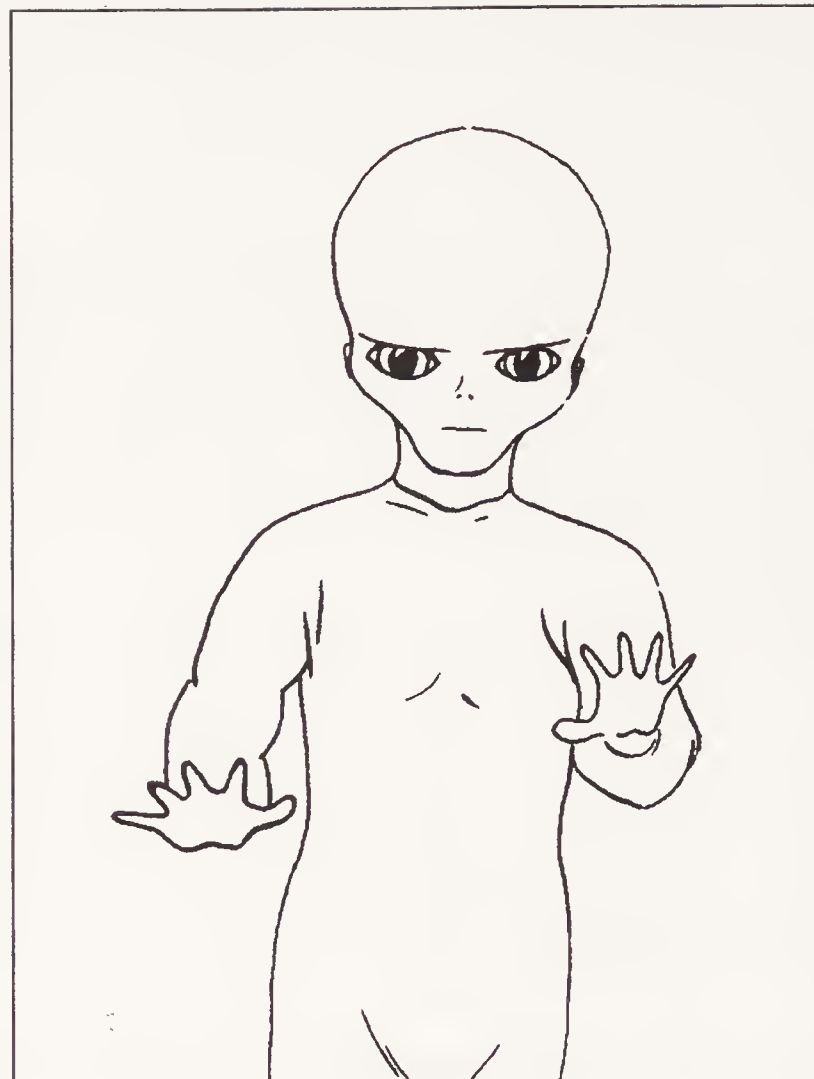
Travis saw three figures dressed in loose-fitting orange one-piece suits standing near him, one to his right, the other two to his left. As his vision cleared, he recoiled in shock and horror as he realized these were not human beings. He would describe them this way:

They were short, shorter than five feet, and they had very large, bald heads, no hair. Their heads were domed, very large. They looked like fetuses. They had no eyebrows, no eyelashes. They had very large eyes—enormous eyes—almost all brown, without much white in them. The creepiest thing about them were [sic] those eyes. Oh, man, those eyes, they just stared through me. Their mouths and ears and noses seemed real small, maybe just because their eyes were so huge.

Their hands had five fingers. The beings looked frail, with soft marshmallowy skin.

Travis staggered to his feet and shouted at the beings. He struck out and pushed one of them into another. From the ease with which he was able to knock them back, he deduced that they weighed relatively little. Then he grabbed a cylindrical tube off a shelf that jutted from the wall. Assuming from its appearance that the tube was made of glass, he tried to break the top off so that he could threaten the beings with its jagged edges. But the object proved unbreakable. Nonetheless, Travis waved it threateningly in their direction. Keeping their distance, they “just stopped and kind of thrust their hands out, like they meant no, or stop.” After a short, tense standoff, the beings turned around and exited quickly out the door immediately behind them.

Shortly thereafter Travis himself ran out of the room and headed left into a curving corridor three feet wide. In short order he came to an open room on his right. It was round, domed, and apparently empty of anything except a high-backed



A sketch of one of Walton's alien captors.  
(Fortean Picture Library)

metal chair in the middle. The chair was supported by a single center leg. Since its back was to him, Travis could not be sure that someone was not sitting in it, but he decided to take a chance. Moving slowly and quietly with his back pressed up against the wall, he positioned himself so that he could glimpse the chair's occupant, if there was one. There wasn't.

When he stepped toward the chair, the light began to fade. He stepped back, and the light returned. He stepped forward again and suddenly was surrounded by stars. He could not tell whether the walls, ceiling, and floor had become transparent, revealing the deep space through which the craft presumably was moving, or starlike points of light had been projected, planetarium-fashion, on all surrounding surfaces. Except for the fact that the walls were still vaguely visible, "the effect was like sitting in a chair in the middle of space," Travis would write.

There was a panel of buttons on the right armrest, along with a screen with vertical black lines. The left armrest held a lever. Travis pushed a couple of the buttons, but nothing happened. Then he sat on the chair and pushed the lever forward. The black lines on the screen moved, and the stars started rotating, though keeping their relative positions all the while. Frightened and disoriented, Travis pulled his hand off the lever, which then returned to its original position on its own. The stars stopped rotating and were frozen into their new positions.

Soon he was fooling with the lever again, and now more radically, pushing it in all directions, hoping that he could open one of the doors whose thin rectangular outlines he thought he could see on the wall in front of him. The stars again whirled around. Travis let go once more, fearing that if he kept playing with the instruments, he might cause some real damage.

He walked over to the wall. The stars faded away, and the room lighted up. Travis ran his fingers along the outline of what he thought might be a closed door, then walked back to the chair. As he was standing beside it, he heard sounds and looked to the open doorway behind the chair. There he was startled to see a human figure wearing a transparent bubble helmet over his head. Shock followed relief as Travis reflected that he was among his own kind.

The man looked like a deeply tanned, muscular Caucasian, about six feet two inches tall, perhaps 200 pounds. He had sandy blond hair long enough to cover his ears, and he was dressed in a tight-fitting, bright blue coverall suit with a black band or belt across the middle. He wore black boots. In his excitement Travis failed to appreciate just how odd the man's eyes looked. A "strange bright golden hazel," they were not really the eyes of a human being.

The figure motioned to Travis, who approached with a series of frantic questions to which the only response was a "tolerant grin." Travis thought the man had said nothing because his helmet blocked out his hearing; maybe they were going some place where the man would remove the helmet, and then they could talk. Led by the arm, Travis was taken into the curving, narrow hallway, the man in the lead,



until they came to a closed door to their right. It opened into a tiny "metal cubicle" of a room that the two entered as the door closed again behind them. Travis asked where they were going, but his companion again ignored the question.

They then entered an enormous room that Travis thought of as an airlock or a hangar. Inside it the air was fresh and cool with gently flowing breezes, almost as if they were outside, and the light was as bright as sunlight. Travis descended a short, steep ramp and looked around him. He would recall:

The ceiling was sectioned into alternating rectangles of dark metal and those that gave off light like the sun shining through a translucent panel. The alternation of the light and dark panels reminded me of a checkerboard. The ceiling itself curved down to form one of the larger walls in the room. The room was shaped like one quarter of a cylinder laid on its side.

The craft Travis and the strange man had just left looked like the one he had seen in the woods except that it was considerably larger, perhaps 60 feet in diameter and 16 feet high. To his left were two similar but smaller vehicles (40 to 45 feet in diameter) parked close to the wall. A silver reflection nearby looked as if it could have come from a third craft, but he was not sure because its source was mostly obscured by the large ship.

The two walked across a floor of springy green rubberlike material to a door in the hangar room. It opened from the middle and brought them into a hallway six feet wide and eight feet high. They walked some 80 feet past a number of closed double doors. "When do we get to go home?" Travis wanted to know. "Where are we going now?" As usual his companion acted as if he had not heard him.

They finally came to another pair of doors at the end of the hallway. As they slid silently open, Travis saw two men and a woman sitting in the room. They were dressed like his companion and even bore a family sort of resemblance to him. Like him, they were good-looking and perfectly featured. The woman, who appeared to be wearing no makeup, wore her hair longer than the men did.

The three were not wearing helmets, which gave Travis false encouragement. "Would somebody *please* tell me where I am?" he asked desperately. The beings only looked at him with pleasant expressions on their faces, and the helmeted man sat him down in a chair before leaving through another door, entering a corridor, and departing to the right.

As Travis continued to talk, the woman and one of the men stepped over to him, one on each side, and took him by his arms to a nearby table. Though initially cooperative, Travis grew less so when he realized that they were not going to tell him anything. He shouted at them, but they continued to look on him with the same silent, kindly look, which amounted to a small, toothless grin. Even as he struggled, the beings managed to force him on his back. Once he was down, he noticed that the woman had in her hand something that "looked like one of those clear, soft-

plastic oxygen masks, only there were no tubes connected to it. The only thing attached to it was a small, black, golfball-sized sphere." She placed it over his mouth and nose, and as Travis prepared to rip it off his face, he lost consciousness.

The next thing he knew, Travis was lying on his back on the highway just outside Heber, 10 miles from the place where he had seen the light in the woods. In the darkness he saw

one of those round craft hovering about four feet over the highway. It was hovering there for just a second. I looked up just as a light went out, like a hatch closing, or just a light going out. A white light just went off on the bottom of it. The craft was dark, and it wasn't giving off any light at all.

Travis ran to the gas station and tried the first of three phones. It didn't work, and he panicked. Maybe all of them were out of order. But he got through on the second, and his brother-in-law Grant Neff answered.

**Walton and the abduction phenomenon.** By 1975 ufologists had collected and investigated a small number of abduction reports. The first case to come to their attention was the **Hill abduction case**, a 1961 close encounter whose abduction aspect, subsequently recovered through hypnosis, first saw print in 1965 and the following year became the subject of a best-selling book. At the time of the Walton disappearance, John G. Fuller's *The Interrupted Journey* was the only full-length treatment of an abduction episode. The next, Coral and Jim Lorenzen's *Abducted!*, would not be published until 1977.

On October 20, 1975, NBC television broadcast a docudrama, *The UFO Incident*, on the Hill case. Klass and other critics would make much of this. Travis insisted neither he nor any other witness had seen the show. In any event, there is not much similarity between the Hills's story and Walton's. There is, moreover, not a great deal of similarity between Walton's and any other abduction narrative that would have been known to him from the UFO literature as of November 1975.

What Jim and Coral Lorenzen found particularly fascinating, however, was the curious fact that at the time the Walton story broke, they were working on an abduction investigation Walton could have known nothing about. The claimant, Air Force Sgt. Charles Moody, reported a close encounter on August 13, 1975, in the New Mexico desert. APRO's investigation began the following month and continued for some months. In a letter Moody wrote the Lorenzens early in November, he described the UFO's occupants in this way:

The beings were about five feet tall and very much like us except their heads were larger and hairless, their ears very small, eyes a little larger than ours, nose small[,] and the mouth had very thin lips.

Moody's entities were to all intents and purposes identical to the ones Walton allegedly encountered in the period just after he recovered consciousness.



Unlike Walton, Moody described communications (via telepathy) between himself and the beings. Moody was told that the ship he had boarded “was not their main craft, but only one used for observing. . . . [T]heir main craft was about four hundred of our miles above the earth.” Furthermore, these beings worked in cooperation with other extraterrestrial races—though Moody, unlike Walton, reported encountering no representatives of these.

Entities like these were unknown to ufologists prior to the Moody and Walton reports, but as abduction cases proliferated in the years ahead, they would become staples of close-encounter lore. So would reports of onboard encounters with humanlike or near-human beings associated with smaller entities.

**Continuing controversy.** The Walton case was the subject of two paperback books published in 1978. In *Ultimate Encounter*, author Bill Barry found Klass’s and other critics’ charges to be without merit, and he concluded that to all appearances Travis and the others were telling the truth as they saw it. Travis’s own book, *The Walton Experience*, told the story from his perspective and defended himself against the would-be debunkers.

The witnesses went their own ways. Travis remained in Snowflake and married Mike Rogers’s sister Dana, with whom he had four children. His UFO story did not expand in the telling; he claimed no further memories of what happened to him during those five days. He reemerged into public view in March 1993, when *Fire in the Sky*, a Paramount Pictures feature film based on his book, appeared in the theaters, to modest success, mixed reviews, and ufologists’ complaints about its inaccuracies and exaggerations. The film starred D. B. Sweeney as Travis and Robert Patrick as Mike Rogers; Robert Lieberman directed from a script by Tracy Tormé.

More important to ufologists were the new polygraph tests Walton, Rogers, and Allen Dalis underwent on February 1, 1993. They happened through the insistence of a skeptical ufologist, Jerry Black. Walton and the others initially felt—based on their experience with the first—that another test would be pointless. In due course, however, they changed their minds. Cy Gilson tested Dalis (whom neither Walton nor Rogers had seen in years) and judged him “truthful when he answered these relevant questions” having to do with whether he had seen a UFO on November 5, 1975, and whether he conspired to perpetrate a hoax. Dalis affirmed the first and denied the second. Gilson also was convinced that Walton and Rogers were telling the truth when they responded affirmatively to questions about seeing the UFO and negatively to those about staging a hoax.

To promote the film, Walton and Rogers made the rounds of the talk shows. On March 12, the day the movie was released, the two appeared on CNN’s *Larry King Show* in a fierce debate with Klass, who at one point lost his temper and called Rogers a “goddamned liar.”

Prior to their appearance and unknown to the larger public, a bizarre episode had unfolded. It began with a phone call to Walton from a man who iden-

tified himself as an independent witness to the November 5 encounter. The stranger, then allegedly an Army Intelligence officer, said he and his wife had been hunting in the area when they saw the craft and witnessed the beam. Later, he asserted, he had told his superior officer about the UFO but was told to keep silent unless the crew were about to be convicted of murder.

The man had the details generally right and sounded “genuine,” in Walton’s estimation. He notified Tormé, and soon afterwards Paramount—without notifying Walton—flew the informant to Los Angeles to interview him. On March 11, 1993, in Phoenix, Cy Gilson administered a polygraph test in which the man was asked two series of questions. The first concerned the sighting and his claim to having a high security clearance. The second asked him if he was conspiring with anyone to discredit Walton’s story (Klass and the debunking Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal [CSICOP] were mentioned specifically), if he had a current military affiliation, and if indeed a military supervisor had ordered him not to speak of what he had seen.

The results were curious. In Gilson’s reading they indicated that the man was lying. More than that, however, there was evidence of “a deliberate attempt to produce countermeasures.” In other words, it looked as if someone who may have been trained in beating polygraph tests had tried, and failed, to mislead Gilson and Paramount. As Walton saw it:

The intent of the scheme seems to have been to fool Paramount into believing they [sic] had a corroborating witness, while deliberately providing enough incorrect details to justify claiming later that Paramount had disregarded accuracy to a negligent or even to a conspiratorial degree. The corollary plan was apparently to deceive Cy Gilson, then confess later to discredit the rigorousness of his methodology, and therefore discredit his tests on all seven of us.

To Walton the logical suspects were Klass and CSICOP. Walton noted the possibly suggestive circumstance that though King’s program and Klass’s residence are in the same city—Washington, D.C.—Klass had flown in from CSICOP headquarters in Buffalo, New York, to participate in the show. “Perhaps,” Walton wondered, “from a panicked strategy rehearsal, a hasty tactical session?” Though Walton was unaware of it, the incident—if indeed it was an unsuccessful plot to discredit his case—was not without precedent. In the early 1980s James Randi, a magician/debunker associated with CSICOP, engineered a hoax under the code name Project Alpha and sent two young sleight-of-hand artists to a parapsychological laboratory, with the intention of convincing experimenters that they possessed psychokinetic metal-bending powers. The purpose, of course, was to prove Randi’s long-standing contention that parapsychologists are easily fooled. Though observers disagreed about how well Project Alpha succeeded, it generated much attention, and debunkers made a great deal of it.

Klass and CSICOP have not commented on Walton’s charges.



In 1996 *Fire in the Sky*, a much-expanded version of the 1978 book, saw print. For the first time Walton answered Klass's charges in meticulous detail. In an 85-page appendix drawing on a considerable amount of original research, Walton ripped into virtually every allegation, large or small, Klass had made over the years, and he tore into the logic, consistency, and even honesty of the debunker's case. He also raised serious questions about McCarthy's professional competence and qualifications. To most readers Walton's refutation would seem itself virtually irrefutable.

Two decades later, what are we to make of the Walton case?

In the end how one views the Walton controversy depends on how one feels about UFOs in general and alien-abduction claims in particular. If one believes it is possible that UFOs exist as piloted extraterrestrial vehicles, one can accept that Travis Walton boarded a spacecraft and interacted with its occupants. If one believes such things are not possible, one has little choice but to insist that a heretofore-undetected hoax scheme underlies the claim.

Nearly all of the available evidence would lead one to the conclusion that Walton, his family, and the logging crew are not hoaxers. If there is compelling evidence to the contrary, it has yet to emerge—which is not to say, of course, that it could *never* emerge. In the end Klass's case rests on a single dubious polygraph result and a mass of lurid but apparently baseless speculations. Should the Walton episode turn out to be a hoax, we may be confident that it will not be the kind of hoax Klass says it was. In the end Klass's reckless and emotional attacks have only done damage to the skeptical case. As long as it remains *the* skeptical case, there is no skeptical case.

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## WASHINGTON NATIONAL RADAR/VISUAL CASE

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## WASHINGTON NATIONAL RADAR/ VISUAL CASE

At 11:40 p.m. on Saturday, July 19, 1952, Edward Nugent, an air traffic controller at Washington National Airport, spotted seven "pips" or "blips" clustered together in a corner of the radarscope. They were moving at 100 mph over an area 15 miles south-southwest of the capital. No aircraft were known to be in that location, and the blips were not following established flight paths.

Nugent quickly alerted his superior, Harry G. Barnes, senior air traffic controller for the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA), and joked about a "fleet of flying saucers." According to Barnes:

We knew immediately that a very strange situation existed. . . . [T]heir movements were completely radical compared to those of ordinary aircraft. They followed no set course [and] were not in any formation, and we only seemed to be able to track them for about three miles at a



time. The individual pip would seem to disappear from the scope at intervals. Later I realized that if these objects had made any sudden burst of extremely high speed, that would account for them [sic] disappearing from the scope temporarily.

Two other controllers checked the radar set to make sure it was functioning properly. When they found nothing wrong, Barnes called his counterpart at Washington National's other radar, Tower Central, located a quarter-mile away. Barnes's operation concentrated on long-range (70-mile-radius) radar detection, while the other directed aircraft making a final approach. Howard Cocklin at Central told Barnes that his radar was tracking the objects. Not only that, but when he looked out the tower's big glass window, he saw one of the objects—"a bright orange light. I can't tell what's behind it."

When the objects spread all over the sector and moved over the White House and the Capitol Building, Barnes phoned Andrews Air Force Base, 10 miles to the east, and asked if it knew anything about the objects. A civilian controller there said the only aircraft of which Andrews was aware was a C-47 transport plane an hour away. But moments later an airman phoned the tower to report strange objects in the sky near the base and to urge Airman William Brady, who took the call, to look to the south. There Brady saw an "object which appeared to be like an orange ball of fire, trailing a tail[;] it appeared to be about two miles south and one-half mile from the Andrews range. It was very bright and definite, and unlike anything I had ever seen before. . . . It made kind of a circular movement."

He shouted to others in the tower to look but even as he was speaking, the orange object abruptly stopped, then "took off at an unbelievable speed," disappearing in a "split second."

"Seconds later," Brady would tell Air Force investigators, "I saw another one, same description. As the one before[,] it made an arclike pattern and then disappeared. I only saw each object for about a second." The other tower personnel saw nothing, perhaps because the events occurred so rapidly that they were over by the time the potential co-witnesses had time to turn their heads.

Minutes later Barnes called from National to say that unknowns were being tracked east and west of Andrews. Repair work on Andrews' runways was keeping its jet interceptors on the ground. A squadron would have to be dispatched from Newcastle AFB in Delaware.

A memo in the **Project Blue Book** files notes a sighting from Barnes's tower, Airway Traffic Control Central (ARTC), at around 12:30, of an "orange disk about 3,000 feet altitude at 360 degrees."

**A night to remember.** As he sat in the cockpit of his DC-4 waiting for permission to take off, Capital Airlines Capt. S. C. Pierman saw a fiery blue-white object flash across the horizon. He assumed—probably correctly—that it was a meteor, but a few minutes after his 1 a.m. liftoff, as he switched radio channels from Tower

Central to ARTC, he was told that radar indicated the presence of unidentified objects about nine miles from him. Soon word came that the target was now four miles away, then even nearer and at ten o'clock. Pierman first saw another DC-4, but then he spotted other things in the black sky: bright, white, tailless, fast-moving lights—a total of six in all over a 14-minute period.

Barnes related, "Each sighting coincided with a pip we could see near his plane. When he reported that the light streaked off at high speed, it disappeared on our scope." Pierman said the object had "climbed out of sight in three to five seconds," and the short-range radar at Washington Tower Control tracked another of the objects, according to Cocklin, as it took a steep descent, leveled off briefly, then ascended abruptly before vanishing off the radar beam.

Meanwhile, at Andrews, personnel in the control tower were observing objects that some took to be UFOs but that cooler heads suspected, and at least once were able to prove, were meteors and stars. At 2 a.m., alerted by ARTC that a target was being tracked heading their way, Andrews tower personnel sought unsuccessfully to pick it up on their own screen, but one of them, Capt. Harold C. May, stepped outside, where he observed a light that he thought was changing color "from red to orange to green to red again. . . . [A]t times [it dipped] suddenly and appear[ed] to lose altitude." Later May himself concluded he had seen nothing more than a star.

A more impressive sighting was taking place at around the same time. The witness, Staff Sgt. Charles Davenport of Andrews' 1053rd Maintenance Squadron, spotted an orange-red light to the south of the base. "It would appear to stand still, then make an abrupt change of direction and altitude." This happened "several times." After Davenport notified the tower, individuals there saw the object for a few seconds as it was shooting out of sight.

ARTC was detecting targets near Bolling AFB, located between National and Andrews. Bolling was so informed. At Bolling's Mobile Control Tower Staff Sgt. Don Wilson sighted a round, amber light seven miles to the southeast. The slowly drifting object was visible for a few minutes. At 2:30 a guard going off duty observed, in the southwestern sky, an object that

looked to be the size of a golfball . . . bright orange in color. The object moved from the west to the northeast in a half circle pattern and was travelling at such speed that I knew that it could not be a jet aircraft, my estimation of it from 1000 to 2000 mph. It would be hard to judge at what altitude the object was flying because it seemed to lose and gain altitude. The object moved in this pattern several times and then disappeared into the west. From the time I saw the object and then lost it, I would say it was about 15 to 20 minutes.

At one point ARTC, National Tower, and Andrews all fixed on an object hovering over the Riverdale radio beacon. During the 30 seconds it was registering on

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the screens, the operators were able to doublecheck their readings. Suddenly the target vanished—on all three screens at the same moment.

At 3 a.m. the UFOs suddenly were gone, and soon after, two interceptors arrived belatedly from Newcastle AFB. They searched the skies until their fuel ran low, forcing them to head back to Delaware. As soon as they were gone, the UFOs were back.

To Barnes this confirmed a suspicion that the UFOs were monitoring radio traffic and behaving accordingly. He had noticed even before the jets' arrival that when he vectored Pierman's DC-4 toward a particular target, the object would dart away and so maintain its distance.

Soon after the Air Force jets' departure, Capt. Howard Dermott, at the controls of an approaching Capital Airlines flight, noticed a light take up position behind him as his plane passed over Herndon, Virginia. When he notified National, both radar sets picked up the target exactly where Dermott said it was. The radars also tracked it as it turned away four miles from the airport.

The apparent indifference of the military and official hierarchy to the ongoing drama baffled and frustrated Barnes. Not long after midnight, he had phoned Military Flight Service (MFS) and been urged to contact the nearest Air Force base intelligence officer. Later, around 3 a.m., Barnes called again and talked with two anonymous individuals who would say only that the information was being "forwarded to higher authority."

At 3:30 Sgt. Davenport saw a UFO at treetop level. Bluish silver in color, it moved erratically, rolling from side to side as it sped by. He told Air Force investigators, "Three times I saw a red object leave the silver object at a high rate of speed and move east out of sight."

Radar trackings continued into the dawn, the last of them at 5:30, when seven or eight were monitored on the ARTC screen. In the early-morning daylight a civilian radio engineer, E. W. Chambers, who did not know then of the night's events (which had not yet been publicized), got what may have been the closest view of the UFOs of the previous hours. He described them as five huge discs circling in a loose formation. They tilted upward and left on a steep ascent.

Reflecting on the night's incredible events, Barnes wrote in a widely distributed newspaper account that the UFOs seemed to

become most active around the planes we saw on the scope. . . . [T]hey acted like a bunch of small kids out playing . . . directed by some innate curiosity. At times they moved as a group or cluster, at other times as individuals over widely scattered areas. . . .

There is no other conclusion I can reach but that for six hours . . . there were at least 10 unidentifiable objects moving above Washington. They were not ordinary aircraft. I could tell that by their movement on the

scope. I can safely deduce that they performed gyrations which no known aircraft could perform. By this I mean that our scope showed that they could make right angle turns and complete reversals of flight. Nor in my opinion could any natural phenomena such as shooting stars, electrical disturbances or clouds account for these spots on our radar.

Two reports in the files of the **National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena** (NICAP) indicate that radar targets of unidentified targets continued for at least another day, into the evening of July 20. These later reports have been almost entirely ignored in treatments of the Washington events and are seldom mentioned even in passing. A rare reference appears in *Time*, which, in an account of the events of the two weekends of July 19/20 and 26/27, has this to say of what happened between these dates: "All the rest of the week, a few strange blips appeared now & then."

Around mid-evening of the twentieth, according to Betty Ann Behl, at the time an Air Force weather observer, later (when she filed her report with NICAP) a science teacher at a Milwaukee college, blips appeared on the radar screen at Andrews. Moving in an "orderly" fashion and at high speed, the objects approached the runway, then passed over it, scattering as they did so. Behl said they "performed gyrations and reversals" of an extraordinary nature, unlike anything the radar personnel had ever seen before. Their speed was in excess of 900 mph. Radar indicated that the UFOs were between 100 and 200 feet in diameter. Behl had seen temperature inversions and other meteorological effects on radar, but the blips on the screen were something else, she was certain.

A visual sighting took place at about the same time: 9:30 p.m. At Alexandria, Virginia, just southwest of Washington National Airport, an Army artillery officer, Joseph H. Gigandet, was sitting on his porch taking in the view when a red cigar-shaped object sailed slowly overhead from the west. Gigandet estimated its altitude at 10,000 feet and its size about that of a DC-6 or DC-7. Along its side the UFO had a "series of lights very closely set together." It hovered for 30 to 40 seconds before circling northward. In short order it reappeared over the house, this time slightly south of the location it had occupied the first time. Gigandet assumed it had circled the area.

Again it stopped moving for half a minute or so, and again, when it accelerated, it turned a deeper red. Now, however, it was heading eastward, to be lost to sight in the city glare. Gigandet's neighbor, an FBI agent, also saw the UFO. When Gigandet called a local newspaper to ask if anyone else had reported the phenomenon, he was told there had been numerous calls.

**Blue Book shut out.** Though Project Blue Book was ostensibly the Air Force's sole UFO-investigation agency, its head, Capt. **Edward J. Ruppelt**, did not learn of the Washington events until Tuesday morning, July 22—even though he and Col. Donald L. Bower, his superior officer at the Air Technical Intelligence Center (ATIC) at Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton, Ohio, had been in Washington on UFO business



for a full day. They had, moreover, flown into Washington National and were meeting (to seek help in the identification of ostensible UFOs caused by aircraft and weather balloons) at Andrews.

Ruppelt and Bower got their first word of the sightings when they sat down for breakfast, morning papers in hand. One glance at the headlines told them what no one had told them. Ruppelt immediately phoned Maj. Dewey Fournet, Blue Book's liaison man at the Pentagon. Fournet said his knowledge was confined to what he had read in the papers, but he was trying to find out more.

The two officers hastened to Fournet's office, where two intelligence officers briefed them. Another briefing took place at 1 p.m. Meanwhile, Ruppelt had been informed of President Truman's personal interest in the affair and his desire for a full investigation, which Ruppelt promised to make.

It was to be a promise he could not fulfill. Though he laid plans for a comprehensive inquiry, the Pentagon refused to give him—or Col. Bower—so much as a staff car. He was further informed that his orders were to return to Dayton that day. He did as he was told.

Ruppelt returned to Wright-Patterson to deal with the nationwide flood of reports that would comprise the great UFO wave of the summer of 1952. But before turning his attention to such matters, he spoke with an ATIC radar specialist, Capt. Roy James (who harbored, according to Ruppelt, a "powerful dislike for UFOs"; see **Fort Monmouth Radar/Visual Case**), and asked him what he thought. James speculated that weather conditions caused the radar targets.

**The return.** On the evening of July 26, at 8:15, the pilot and stewardess of a National Airlines plane observed several objects—which they thought bore a resemblance to the "glow of a cigarette"—high above them and moving at about 100 mph.

Soon both Washington National and Andrews were tracking a dozen unidentified targets in all parts of the sky except the southwest. They were traveling between 90 and 100 mph. Andrews alerted Newcastle just after 9.

The objects were being observed visually as well. One witness, a master sergeant, said, "These lights did not have the characteristics of shooting stars. There was [sic] no trails and they seemed to go out rather than disappear, and traveled faster than any shooting star I have ever seen."

Between 9:15 and 9:30 ARTC directed a B-25 to check on several radar targets, but its crew saw nothing, in spite of repeated attempts. One of the pilots subsequently told Ruppelt that "each time the tower man advised us we were passing the UFO we noticed that we were over one certain section of the Potomac River, just east of Alexandria [Virginia]. Finally we were asked to visually check the terrain below for anything which might cause such an illusion. We looked and the only object we could see where the radar had a target turned out to be the Wilson Lines

steamboat trip to Mount Vernon. . . . [T]he radar was sure as hell picking up the steamboat."

As this was going on, Ruppelt was taking a phone call in Dayton. The caller, *Life* magazine reporter Bob Ginna, informed him of the new sighting outbreak in Washington and asked what the Air Force was going to do. Ruppelt replied bluntly, "I have no idea what the Air Force is doing. In all probability it's doing nothing." Ruppelt phoned the Pentagon and asked the intelligence duty officer, Capt. F. E. Smith, to get in touch with Fournet, who lived near the airport.

In turn Fournet, accompanied by a Navy electronics specialist assigned to Air Force Intelligence, went to the ARTC radar room, where they found Albert M. Chop, a civilian who dealt with the press on UFO matters through the Air Force Office of Public Information. He and tower personnel were monitoring the radar returns.

Fournet and the Navy officer, a Lt. Holcomb, did not arrive until after midnight, but by 9:30 both ARTC and Andrews were tracking more targets than they could handle. Sometimes they moved slowly, at less than 100 mph, and sometimes abruptly reversed direction and streaked across the sky at what calculations indicated was 7000 mph. At 10:46 a CAA flight instructor reported seeing five glowing, orange-white lights over Washington at 2200 feet. Six minutes later the targets all disappeared from the screens. Nonetheless, at 11 two F-94s were scrambled from Newcastle.

By the time they arrived, 30 minutes later, UFOs were back and on the ARTC scopes. Lt. William Patterson, the pilot of one of the interceptors, was vectored after fast-moving targets 10 miles away. He saw four white "glows" and chased after them. To his horror they shot toward him and clustered around his plane. He radioed in to the tower to ask what he ought to do. According to Chop, the answer was "stunned silence. . . . After a tense moment, the UFOs pulled away and left the scene."

Soon afterwards Patterson chased a bright light, but it went out. Two more vectors produced no visual sightings. The other pilot, Capt. John McHugo, followed instructions from the ground but saw nothing in spite of repeated attempts. At 12:04 a.m., for example, ARTC had a flock of targets all around him, but even after a 360-degree turn McHugo could see nothing.

Over the next hour both ARTC and Andrews tracked targets. At the former Lt. Holcomb was getting meteorological data from the Washington National Weather Station. He learned of a slight temperature inversion; in his estimation, however, it was not nearly strong enough to explain the "good and solid" returns showing up on the radar screens. When that analysis was phoned in to Newcastle, F-94s were scrambled again. On arriving they were vectored toward various targets—which the radar operators noted were weaker than the earlier ones—but only in two cases did the pilot see anything; one was a conventional aircraft, the other a hovering white light that vanished when approached. Their fuel running low, the F-94s returned to Delaware.



At 3 a.m. ARTC picked up a target in the general vicinity of an Eastern Airlines Constellation. When notified, the pilot looked without success for its source. But now radar was indicating the unknown was behind the airliner. When the pilot began to turn the plane around, the target suddenly disappeared. A few minutes later a Capital airliner flying from National to Martinsburg, West Virginia, saw "odd lights" that remained visible for 12 minutes.

The night passed without further excitement. Anomalous blips continued to appear on ARTC's radar, but they were of the sort associated with temperature inversions.

In the morning Ruppelt called Fournet and asked him if he thought the UFOs could be explained as weather phenomena. Fournet said no; everyone in the radar room was convinced that the best returns were from "solid metallic objects."

**The debunking and the debunking debunked.** Nonetheless, responding to banner headlines and public alarm, the Air Force held a press conference in the Pentagon on the afternoon of July 29 and seemed to favor the inversion explanation. At least that was how newspapers treated what a transcript reveals were rather ambiguous remarks that uncharitable observers might characterize as doubletalk.

The Air Force was represented by Maj. Gen. John A. Samford, director of intelligence, assisted by Bower, Ruppelt, James, and Burgoyne L. Griffing of ATIC's electronics branch. Next to Samford, UFO skeptic James made the biggest impression on the reporters who packed the conference room. Though James knew little about the incidents—he had arrived in Washington only that morning and had demonstrated minimal interest in the affair when Ruppelt had tried to discuss it with him earlier—he indicated there was "some possibility" that the targets were caused by inversions (an atmospheric condition that bends radar beams so that they pick up objects on the ground). The result was a rush of headlines typified by the *Washington Post's* AIR FORCE LAYS SAUCER BLIPS HERE TO HEAT and the *Washington Daily News's* "SAUCER" ALARM DISCOUNTED BY PENTAGON; RADAR OBJECTS LAID TO COLD AIR FORMATIONS.

Ruppelt would write that Fournet and Holcomb, who rejected the inversion explanation, were "extremely conspicuous by their absence." Moreover, according to an INS press wire story that attracted far less attention than articles hailing the debunking of the Washington sightings, no less than the U.S. Weather Bureau was taking issue with the inversion hypothesis. Not a single radar operator at Washington National Airport or Andrews AFB would endorse the explanation.

The press conference had served its purpose, Ruppelt wrote; "the press got off our backs." Though reporters thought the Air Force had endorsed James's speculation, in fact it considered the Washington UFOs "unknowns." Ruppelt, who finally would be allowed to investigate, took note of an "interesting fact: hardly a night passed in June, July, and August in 1952 that there wasn't an inversion in Washington, yet the slow-moving, 'solid' radar targets appeared on only a few nights."

Eventually, however, as Blue Book became essentially a debunking operation that sought to reduce the number of unexplained sightings to negligible numbers, it declared the Washington reports to be the product of "mirage effects created by a double inversion." The visual sightings were laid to "meteors coupled with the normal excitement of witnesses."

But in 1966, when Michael Wertheimer of the Air Force-sponsored **University of Colorado UFO Project** reinterviewed witnesses, he found that they still disputed the inversion explanation and continued to be convinced the phenomena were something out of the ordinary. Yet that did not stop the project's report from concluding that weather conditions had caused bogus radar returns and "meteors and scintillating stars" were the stimuli for the visual sightings.

In the late 1960s, after conducting his own investigation that included interviews with five of the radar personnel and four pilot witnesses, University of Arizona atmospheric physicist **James E. McDonald** dismissed the official explanation as physically impossible. Barnes told him that the radar returns "were not shapeless blobs such as one gets from ground returns under anomalous propagation." Howard Cocklin, who operated Washington National's other (short-range) radar, concurred.

**CIA ponders.** The Washington sightings proved to be a pivotal event in UFO history. They sparked high-level fears that UFO reports—if not UFOs themselves—might constitute a threat to national security. On the two weekends when sightings were at their most intense, intelligence channels were clogged with UFO-related communications. Air Force generals and CIA officials worried that an earthly enemy could take advantage of such a logjam by launching an attack if it so chose. Or it could use UFO reports to confuse Americans and undermine confidence in their leaders.

Immediately following the Washington sightings, the CIA's Office of Scientific Intelligence (OSI) embarked on an inquiry into the UFO issue. On September 24 OSI's assistant director, H. Marshall Chadwell, wrote in a memo to CIA director Walter B. Smith:

The flying saucer situation contains two elements of danger which, in a situation of international tension, have national security implications. . . . The public concern with the phenomena . . . indicates that a fair proportion of our population is mentally conditioned to acceptance of the incredible. In this fact lies the potential for the touching-off of mass hysteria and panic.

Moreover, Chadwell wrote, "At any moment of attack [from the Soviet Union], we are now in a position where we cannot, on an instant basis, distinguish hardware from phantom, and as tension mounts we will run the increasing risk of false alerts and the even greater danger of falsely identifying the real as phantom." Chadwell suggested that identification procedures should be improved, that the psychological-warfare aspects be studied, and that a "national policy should be established as to what should be told the public regarding the phenomena."



All of this resulted in a CIA-sponsored meeting in January 1953, under the direction of physicist H. P. Robertson, and a recommendation that henceforth, in the interest of national security, UFO reports should be debunked and thereby reduced (see **Robertson Panel**)—a recommendation Blue Book would follow from then until its closing in 1969.

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# UFO RESOURCES

## North American Organizations

### AETHERIUS SOCIETY (AS)

6202 Afton Pl.  
Hollywood, CA 90028

Individuals united to promote the teachings of the Master Aetherius (pseudonym of a being from the planet Venus), Jesus, and the other Cosmic Masters.

### CANADIAN UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS RESEARCH NETWORK, INC.

592 Sheppard Ave. N.  
Box 77547  
Downsview, Ontario M3H 6A7 Canada  
Phone: (416) 787-1905

Conducts investigations into all manner of UFO phenomena and maintains a large library of UFO-related materials.

**Publication:** *CUFORN Bulletin*, bimonthly.

### CENTER FOR SCIENTIFIC ANOMALIES RESEARCH

Department of Sociology  
Eastern Michigan University  
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

A scholarly organization with "primary focus on the study and evaluation of bodies of anomalous observations rather than

upon esoteric theories seeking to explain already known phenomena." Its orientation is "entirely scientific," seeking fair and open inquiry and constructive skepticism.

**Publication:** *Zetetic Scholar*, periodic.

### CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF EXTRATERRESTRIAL INTELLIGENCE

PO Box 15401  
Asheville, NC 288213  
Phone: (704) 274-5671  
Fax: (704) 274-6766

CSETI's "CE-5 initiative" is an active effort to contact extraterrestrials using the organization's protocol. Its Project Starlight initiative seeks to bring full official disclosure on official and military knowledge of ET visitation.

### CITIZENS AGAINST UFO SECRECY (CAUS)

PO Box 176  
Stoneham, MA 02180

Volunteer researchers specializing in the acquisition and analysis of documentation by local, state, and federal agencies concerning unidentified flying objects.

**Publication:** *Just Cause*, quarterly.



## COLLECTORS OF UNUSUAL DATA— INTERNATIONAL (COUD-I)

c/o Raymond Nelke  
2312 Shields Ave.  
St. Louis, MO 63136

Phone: (314) 388-0087

Individuals who collect unusual facts and information for personal enjoyment. Monitors and compiles information on paranormal and occult events and phenomena such as perpetual motion devices, arcane aspects of the Kennedy assassination, and strange meteorological events.

**Publication:** *COUD-I Research Kit—Anomalous Thoughts*, periodic.

## COMMITTEE FOR THE SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION OF CLAIMS OF THE PARANORMAL (CSICOP)

PO Box 703  
Amherst, NY 14226

Phone: (716) 636-1425

Fax: (716) 636-1733

E-mail: Skeptinq@AOL.com

Psychologists, philosophers, astronomers, science writers and others interested in the field of the paranormal, including UFOs, astrology, and psychic phenomena, and in controversies in science.

**Publication:** *Skeptical Inquirer*, bimonthly.

## FUND FOR UFO RESEARCH (FUFOR)

PO Box 277  
Mount Rainier, MD 20712 USA

Phone: (703) 684-6032

Fax: (703) 684-6032

Reviews research proposals; approves those that promise to advance scientific knowledge and public understanding of UFO phenomena. Conducts research on the U.S. government's involvement with UFOs, the abduction phenomenon, and case investigations.

**Publication:** *Fund for UFO Research—Quarterly Report*.

## GREENVILLE UFO STUDY GROUP

c/o Margaret McManus  
110 Buckingham Way  
Taylors, SC 29687 USA

Phone: (803) 292-5630

E-mail: jpauljude@aol.com

Interested persons organized to study and research the phenomenon of unidentified flying objects (UFOs) by combining talents, areas of expertise, and investigative efforts.

## HOUSTON UFO NETWORK, INC.

PO Box 942  
Bellaire, TX 77402

Phone: (713) 597-2834

Investigates sighting reports in Houston and surrounding area and trains field researchers.

**Publication:** *HUFON Report*, bimonthly.

## INSTITUTE FOR UFO CONTACTEE STUDIES (IFUFOCS)

1425 Steele St.  
Laramie, WY 82070 USA

Phone: (307) 745-7897

Supporters are persons interested in the UFO phenomena.

## INTER-GALACTIC SPACECRAFT UFO INTERCONTINENTAL RESEARCH AND ANALYTIC NETWORK

35-40 75th St., Ste. 4G  
Flushing, NY 11372-4465

Phone: (718) 672-7948

Participants include organizations, military research scientists, and UFO analytic researchers. Established to preserve universal peace and prevent a space war.

**Publication:** *Green Memorandum*.

## INTERNATIONAL FORTEAN ORGANIZATION

PO Box 367  
Arlington, VA 22210

Phone: (301) 294-4315

Honoring the work of Charles Fort (1874-1932), INFO holds annual conferences (Fortfests) and publishes the quarterly INFO Journal, which deals with a broad range of anomalous physical phenomena, including UFOs.

**Publication:** *INFO Journal*.

## INTRUDERS FOUNDATION

Box 30233

New York, NY 10011

Phone: (212) 645-5278

Investigates the abduction phenomenon and assists those who have experienced it. Director Budd Hopkins is an internationally famous authority on the subject and author of three books on it.

**Publication:** *Bulletin of the Intruders Foundation*.

## J. ALLEN HYNEK CENTER FOR UFO STUDIES (CUFOS)

2457 W. Peterson Ave., Ste. 6  
Chicago, IL 60659

Phone: (312) 271-3611

Fax: (312) 465-1898

Exists to encourage scientific research into the UFO phenomenon and to publish serious literature on UFO investigations, history, theory, and related matters.

**Publications:** *International UFO Reporter*, quarterly; *Journal of UFO Studies*, approximately annually.

## MIDOHIO RESEARCH ASSOCIATES, INC.

5837 Karric Square Dr.  
PO Box 162  
Dublin, OH 43016

Phone: (614)486-5877

Formed to investigate reports, explore aspects of UFO history, and collect documents for a permanent collection of use to researchers and scholars.

**Publication:** *Ohio UFO Notebook*, 2-3/year.

## MUTUAL UFO NETWORK (MUFON)

103 Oldtowne Rd.  
Seguin, TX 78155 USA

Phone: (210) 379-9216

Fax: (210) 372-9439

Scientists, engineers, doctors, psychologists, technicians, military personnel, computer programmers, pilots, and others. Seeks to resolve the enigma of unidentified flying objects and investigate UFO sighting reports worldwide.

**Publications:** *MUFON Field Investigators Manual*, 5/year; *MUFON International UFO Symposium Proceedings*, annual; *MUFON UFO Journal*, monthly.

## NATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE ON UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS (NICUFO)

14617 Victory Blvd., Ste. 4  
Van Nuys, CA 91411 USA

Phone: (818) 989-5942

Fax: (818) 989-2165

Individuals interested in investigating the truth concerning UFOs and associated phenomena.

## OCCIDENTAL SOCIETY OF METEMPIRIC ANALYSIS (OSMA)

PO Box 203  
Simla, CO 80835

Investigates all types of metempsychic phenomena (unexplained occurrences ignored or discounted by scientists) such as sightings of UFOs, aliens, ghosts, and Bigfoot.

## OPERATION RIGHT TO KNOW

PO Box 3173  
Gaithersburg, MD 20885

An activist organization which, via demonstrations and other pressures, seeks to force release of official UFO secrets.

**Publication:** *The Right to Know Forum*.



### PLEIADES FOUNDATION FOR PEACE AND SPACE EDUCATION (PFPSE)

1570 Nannette Dr.  
Reno, NV 89502

Phone: (702) 826-5836

Fax: (702) 826-3366

Promotes spiritual, metaphysical, and UFO research. Fosters interest in extraterrestrial beings and out-of-body experiences as a means of achieving an inner peace.

### PROJECT 1947

PO Box 319  
Canterbury, CT 06331

Phone: (860) 546-9135

Research organization interested in the early history of the UFO phenomenon. Has amassed documents from many sources, military, government, and civilian, and hundreds of organizations worldwide contribute to this ongoing effort.

**Publication:** *Aerial Phenomena Research List*, irregular.

### PROJECT STARLIGHT INTERNATIONAL (PSI)

PO Box 845  
College Park, MD 20740 USA

Collects and disseminates a broad range of instrumented UFO hard data to the scientific community and the public.

**Publication:** *Newsletter*, periodic.

### PROJECT VISIT—VEHICLE INTERNAL SYSTEMS INVESTIGATIVE TEAM (VISIT)

PO Box 890327  
Houston, TX 77289-0327

Phone: (713) 488-2884

Fax: (713) 488-3121

Researchers, including engineers, scientists, analysts, and investigators interested in unidentified flying objects.

### SKEPTICS SOCIETY

PO Box 338  
Altadena, CA 91001

Phone: (818)794-3119

Fax: (818)794-1301

Examines a broad range of scientific, historical, religious, medical, paranormal, anomalous, and other controversial claims, including UFOs.

**Publication:** *Skeptic*, quarterly.

### SOCIETY OF EARTHBOUND EXTRATERRESTRIALS (SEE)

2140 Shattuck Ave., Ste. 2329  
Berkeley, CA 94704

Phone: (403) 426-3134

Fax: (403) 429-4926

E-mail: seeufos@ccinet.ab.ca

Individuals interested in extraterrestrial studies and UFO research. Seeks to develop awareness of UFO research and raise funds for public scientific facilities.

**Publication:** *Seescapes*, periodic.

### UFO INFORMATION RETRIEVAL CENTER (UFOIRC)

3131 W. Cochise Dr., No. 158  
Phoenix, AZ 85051

Phone: (602) 997-1523

Fax: (602) 870-3178

E-mail: thomas-m-olsen@msn.com

Collects, analyzes, publishes, and disseminates information on reports of unidentified flying objects.

### SOCIETY FOR SCIENTIFIC EXPLORATION

PO Box 5848  
Stanford, CA 94309

Phone: (415) 593-8581

Fax: (415) 595-4466

Formed in 1982 at a meeting held at the National Academy of Sciences, the SSE is concerned with "those phenomena that

appear to contradict existing scientific knowledge and which . . . are generally regarded by the scientific community as being outside their established fields of inquiry." Employing standard scientific methodology, its members examine anomalous and paranormal claims in a critical-minded but sympathetic matter.

**Publication:** *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, quarterly.

## International UFO Organizations

### ARCHIVES FOR UFO RESEARCH (AFU)

Postfack 11027

S-600 11 Norrkoping, Sweden

Supported by researchers and individuals interested in unidentified flying objects. Seeks to establish a complete collection of UFO literature.

**Publication:** *AFU Newsletter* (in English), 1-2/year.

### BRITISH UFO RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (BUFORA)

1 Woodhall Dr.

Batley, West Yorkshire, WF17 7SW, England  
London WC1N 3XX, England

E-mail: eI51@Qial.pipex.com

Organizations and individuals interested in investigating UFO reports. Promotes and conducts research on unidentified flying object phenomena in the United Kingdom.

**Publication:** *UFO Times*, bimonthly.

### NEW ZEALAND UFO STUDIES CENTRE (NUSC)

168 Brooklands Rd.

New Plymouth, New Zealand

Individuals interested in critically investigating UFO sightings. Seeks to prevent misinterpretation of natural phenomena.

### SCANDINAVIAN UFO INFORMATION (SUFOI)

Postboks 6

DK-2820 Gentofte, Denmark

Individuals interested in the investigation of unidentified flying objects (UFOs). Wishes to contribute to the understanding of the UFO phenomenon.

**Publications:** *SUFOI-News* (in English), periodic; *UFO-NYT* (in Danish), quarterly.

### VICTORIAN UFO RESEARCH SOCIETY

Box 43

Moorabbin, Victoria 3189, Australia

In existence since 1957, VUFORS takes a scientific approach to the UFO phenomenon. It stresses field investigation, historical research, and public education.

**Publication:** *Australian UFO Bulletin*, quarterly.

## Other Resources

### FLYING SAUCER REVIEW

FSR Publications, Ltd.

Box 162

High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP13 5DZ, England

Magazine with material from writers and researchers all over the world. Its current editor, Gordon Creighton, believes UFOs to be demonic phenomena, and much material reflects an occult point of view, though straightforward investigative pieces also appear regularly. Quarterly.

### FORTEAN STUDIES

Box 2409

London NW5 4NP, England

Published as a thick book once a year, Fortean Studies is a collection of well-researched papers on unexplained physical phenomena, folklore, criticism, and theories. It regularly carries UFO material.



### **FORTEAN TIMES**

Box 2409  
London NW5 4NP, England

Popular monthly newsstand magazine that treats strange phenomena, among them UFOs, with both high seriousness and wry humor. It is the most widely read magazine of its kind in the world.

### **GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS**

GPO 1994  
New York, NY 10001  
Phone: (212) 685-4080  
Fax: (212) 685-4080

Publisher/editor Timothy Green Beckley reports both credible and far-fetched UFO stories, with emphasis on claims of contact with alien beings.

**Publications:** *UFO Universe*, *Unsolved UFO Sightings*, occasional specials and books.

### **SAUCER SMEAR**

Saucer and Unexplained Celestial Events  
Research Society  
PO Box 1709  
Key West, FL 33041

The "Society" produces this eight-page newsletter (published approximately monthly) devoted to editor James W. Moseley's observations on the UFO scene. Its focus is not on serious research but on controversies, feuds, humor, and gossip.

### **SKEPTICS UFO NEWSLETTER**

404 N St. SW  
Washington, D.C. 20024

Edited by veteran debunker Philip J. Klass, this eight-page bimonthly newsletter reports UFO news from an anti-UFO perspective.

### **STRANGE MAGAZINE**

PO Box 2246  
Rockville, MD 20847  
Phone: (301) 460-4789  
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Edited by Mark Chorvinsky, *Strange* appears twice a year with investigative pieces on anomalous claims and phenomena of the sort Charles Fort chronicled early in this century. UFO matters are one of the subjects of discussion.

### **UFO MAGAZINE**

PO Box 1053  
Sunland, CA 91041  
Phone: (818) 951-1250  
Fax: (818) 951-0098

Carries UFO news and articles on matters of current interest. Monthly.

### **UFO NEWSCLIPPING SERVICE**

2 Caney Valley Dr.  
Plumerville, AR 72127  
Phone: (501) 354-2558

20-page, legal-sized newsletter carrying offprints of newspaper articles about mostly about UFOs but also about Fortean phenomena such as falls from the sky, cryptozoological animals, and other anomalies.

# UFO FILMS AND DOCUMENTARIES

The films and documentaries listed below tackle the subject of UFOs and related phenomena. Because the universe of science fiction feature films is so broad and varied, only films that are thematically geared toward the question and investigation of extraterrestrial life or dramatizations of real-life claims of encounters are included. Many of these titles may be available at your local video store; if you are unable to locate a specific video, try these two sources: UFO Central Home Video, 2321 Abbot Kinney Blvd., Venice, CA 90291 (310-578-5300); or Lightworks Audio & Video, Inc., PO Box 661593, Los Angeles, CA 90066-9193 (800-795-TAPE).

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## Abduction & Surgical Removal of Alien Implants

Dr. Roger K. Leir and researcher Derrel Sims discuss surgery performed on suspected alien abduction victims in order to remove implants from their bodies. Includes graphic footage of the operations.

1996 125m

## Alien Autopsy: Fact or Fiction?

This presentation of some allegedly old film footage that may be of the actual autopsy of an alien being, presumably from a saucer crash in 1947 near Roswell, New Mexico, is hosted by Jonathon Frakes (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*). Others interviewed about the authenticity of the footage include special-effects pro Stan Winton, New Mexico Congressman Steven Schiff, nuclear physicist Stanton Friedman, Eastman Kodak's

Laurence Cate, pathologist Dr. Cyril ("does not appear to be a human being") Wecht, and even former Roswell public relations officer Walter Haut.

**1995 70m Director:** Tom McGough; **Writer:** Robert Kiviat, Tom Seligson.

## Aliens from Spaceship Earth

Are strange, celestial forces invading our universe? If they are, is man prepared to defend his planet against threatening aliens of unknown strength? Docudrama features the Hurdy Gurdy man himself, Donovan.

**1977 107m** Donovan, Lynda Day George; **Director:** Don Como.

## Are We Alone? (In the Universe)

Examines the knowledge ancient civilizations allegedly had of our extraterrestrial



origins. Based on Zecharia Sitchin's best-selling book, *Genesis Revisited*.

60m

### Bob Lazar: Excerpts from the Government Bible

The government says that Bob Lazar was never a scientist of any sort for it, much less the chief physicist in charge of "back engineering" alien disc technology at the ultra-secret area known as S4 of Area 51 in the Nevada Air Force Range. During his stint at the U.S. installation, Lazar claims to have worked on the "Sport Model," only one of nine flying discs that the government was examining.

**1994 45m Director:** Bob Lazar, Gene Huff; **Writer:** Bob Lazar, Gene Huff.

### Capricorn One

An Apollo-style mission to Mars stalls because Americans lack the brains to build a decent spacecraft. To ensure continued NASA funds, Hal Holbrook arranges a phony Martian landing for TV cameras in a remote desert soundstage. Astronauts James Brolin, O.J. Simpson, and Sam Waterson learn the scheme calls for their "heroic" demise to ensure silence, and they try to escape. Remarkably, the besmirched space agency cooperated in filming this intriguing but paper-thin conspiracy thriller, mixing a disaster-pic cast with Watergate-era cynicism at its peak (even the Congressional Medal of Honor earns an insult).

**1978 (R) 123m** Elliott Gould, James Brolin, Brenda Vaccaro, O.J. Simpson, Hal Holbrook, Sam Waterston, Karen Black, Telly Savalas; **Director:** Peter Hyams; **Writer:** Peter Hyams.

### Chariots of the Gods

Author Erich von Daniken presents archaeological evidence from all over the world that is said to support the idea that aliens visited the earth centuries ago.

100m

### Close Encounters of the Third Kind

Strangers from all over the world become involved in the attempts of benevolent aliens to contact Earthlings. Despite the (intentionally) mundane nature of the characters, this Spielberg epic is a stirring achievement. Studded with classic sequences; the ending is an exhilarating experience of special effects and peace-on-Earth feelings. Richard Dreyfuss and Melinda Dillon excel as friends who are at once bewildered and obsessed by the alien presence, and French filmmaker Francois Truffaut is also strong as the stern, ultimately kind scientist. Departing from the common saucer design for extra-terrestrial vehicles, the UFOs appear here as beautiful, multicolored light shows, swooping gracefully about the frame.

**1977 (PG) 152m** Richard Dreyfuss, Teri Garr, Melinda Dillon, Francois Truffaut, Bob Balaban, Cary Guffey, J. Patrick McNamara; **Director:** Steven Spielberg; **Writer:** Steven Spielberg

### The Coming Alien Invasion

Explores the belief that an alien invasion of the earth is inevitable. Includes filmed evidence of extraterrestrials on earth.

60m

### Communion

A serious adaptation of the purportedly nonfiction bestseller by Whitley Strieber, about his 1985 abduction by dwarf drones under the control of spindly, huge-eyed beings (a breed sometimes referred to by UFO hipsters as "schwa"). Even skeptics who've met Strieber declare he's sincere. The film—produced and written by Strieber—is remarkably candid about the author's eccentricities, right down to the notorious episode in which Strieber claimed a vision of Mr. Peanut (replaced onscreen by a top-hatted toy robot).

**1989 (R) 103m** Christopher Walken, Lindsay Crouse, Frances Sternhagen, Joel Carlson, Andreas Katsulas, Basil Hoffman, Terri Hanauer; **Director:** Philippe Mora; **Writer:** Whitley Strieber.

Contact

Radio astronomer Dr. Ellie Arroway (Foster) discovers signals being transmitted from the distant star Vega. When they're deciphered, the signals turn out to be blueprints for a craft that will take its occupant into space for a first meeting with aliens. Ellie fights to become that first spokesperson for Earth's inhabitants. Based on the novel by Carl Sagan.

**1997 (PG) 150m** Jodie Foster, Matthew McConaughey, James Woods, Tom Skerritt, Angela Bassett, John Hurt, David Morse, Rob Lowe, Jake Busey; **Director:** Robert Zemeckis and Michael Goldenberg; **Writer:** Michael Goldenberg.

Contact: An Investigation into the Extraterrestrial Experiences of Eduard Meier

Eduard "Billy" Meier at first comes off as sort of a semi-crazy commune-living hippie. For years he has claimed to be in direct contact with extraterrestrial beings from the star system of the Pleiades. This video, narrated by actor David Warner, presents the case with expert testimony on metal samples, sound recordings, scientific theory, and home movie footage of the "beamships" (so called because of the way that they move faster than the camera's shutter) taken by Meier himself. All angles are covered, from Billy's eccentricities to computer analysis of the data.

**90m Director:** Larry Savadone; **Writer:** Larry Savadone.

Countdown to Alien Nation

Michael Lindemann exposes government cover-ups of UFO evidence and how these

relate to an elaborate scheme to create a New World Order.

115m

Crop Circle Communique

Examines the crop circle phenomenon, including expert interviews.

90m

Crop Circle Lecture: Special at Madison Square Garden

Crop circle expert Jon King's spring 1996 presentation in New York City.

1996 120m

Down in Roswell

Paul Davids, executive producer of the cable movie *Roswell*, hosts this review of media coverage, interviews, and press conferences on the infamous Roswell incident.

60m

Extra Terrestrial Realities

Dr. J. J. Hurtak, an authority on the scientific, sociological and philosophical aspects of UFOs, discusses his views with host Eve Bruce.

58m

Extraterrestrial Archeology

David Hatcher Childress explores evidence of intelligent life in our solar system, including the possibility of a NASA cover-up of findings from the moon landing.

65m

Eyes Behind the Stars

Long before *The X Files*, Italian filmmakers spread the gospel of paranoia to flying saucer believers with this low-budget yarn



of a photographer who gets pictures of a UFO as his model is abducted. He teams with a reporter to expose an international shadow conspiracy of paramilitary Men in Black determined cover up the presence the E.T.'s, who are seemingly non-corporeal and couldn't care less anyway. Torrid and downbeat.

**1972 95m** Martin Balsam, Robert Hoffman, Nathalie Delon, Sherry Buchanan; **Director:** Roy Garrett.

## Faces of the Visitors: Alien Images in History

Has humankind experienced visits from aliens since the beginning of time? The history and folklore of ancient civilizations may suggest as much.

**60m**

## Fire in the Sky

The mysterious disappearance of Travis Walton (D. B. Sweeney) sparks a criminal investigation of his fellow loggers. Then Travis returns, telling a frightening story of alien abduction. Though everyone in town doubts his story, viewers won't, since the alleged aliens have already made an appearance, shifting the focus to Sweeney and friends as he tries to convince skeptics that his trauma is genuine. Spooky and captivating special effects of the alien abduction and alien experiments are some of the few bright spots. Based on a story that might be true.

**1993 (PG-13) 98m** D.B. Sweeney, Robert Patrick, Craig Sheffer, Peter Berg, James Garner, Henry Thomas, Kathleen Wilhoite, Bradley Gregg, Noble Willingham; **Director:** Robert Lieberman; **Writer:** Tracy Torme.

## The Flying Saucer

U.S. and Russian scientists clash over their search for a huge flying saucer that is hidden under a glacier. The first movie to deal with flying saucers. The cassette includes

animated opening and closing sequences plus previews of coming attractions.

**1950 120m/B** Mikel Conrad, Pat Garrison, Hanz von Teuffen; **Director:** Mikel Conrad.

## Flying Saucers Are Real!

Physicist Stanton T. Friedman examines a host of UFO-related topics, including the Hill abduction, Roswell, government conspiracies, evidence of UFO landings, and other compelling phenomena.

**150m**

## The Grand Deception: UFOs, Area 51 & The U.S. Government

Norio Hayakawa contends that a secret international government will stage an extraterrestrial event to bring about conditions leading to a worldwide totalitarian government. Includes footage of UFOs near the Groom Lake S-4 site as well as a scenes unmarked helicopters buzzing a Japanese TV crew.

**100m**

## Hangar 18

Two astronauts are scapegoated for the loss of a shuttle that has actually collided with a UFO. When they learn that the government is hiding the evidence in the title hangar, they set out to blow the lid off off things. Robert Vaughn delivers as a typically sleazy and very sneaky politician who will do anything to prevent the news from leaking out. Shown on TV as *Invasion Force* with a different ending.

**1980 (PG) 97m** Darren McGavin, Robert Vaughn, Gary Collins, James Hampton, Philip Abbott, Pamela Bellwood, Tom Hallick, Cliff Osmond, Joseph Campanella; **Director:** James L. Conway; **Writer:** David O'Malley.

## Heaven's Gate: Culticide in California

Documents the history and philosophy of the Heaven's Gate cult, whose mix of UFO and spiritual beliefs led members to mass suicide.

1997 60m

## Hidden Memories: Are You a UFO Abductee?

Abduction phenomenon expert Budd Hopkins covers the symptoms of alien abduction and examines studies and polls that may suggest millions of Americans may have experienced abductions by aliens.

92m

## A History of Crop Circles

Colin Andrews examines the crop circle phenomenon from its first sightings to the present day.

1992 120m

## Hoagland's Mars

Researcher Richard Hoagland examines possible relationships between ancient civilizations and extraterrestrials, the origins of mysterious structures on Mars and the moon in this three-volume series: Vol. 1: The NASA/Cydonia Briefings; Vol. 2: The U.N. Briefing—The Terrestrial Connection; Vol. 3: The Moon/Mars Connection.

378m

## Intruders

Follows the story of three people who have unexplained lapses of time in their lives which they eventually believe are connected to visits by aliens. The three are brought together by a skeptical psychiatrist. The aliens are typically bugged-eyed and white-faced, but part of the film is genuinely unsettling.

1992 162m Richard Crenna, Mare Winningham, Susan Blakely, Ben Vereen, Steven Berkoff, Daphne Ashbrook; **Director:** Dan Curtis.

## Journey to the Hollow Earth

Are prehistoric animals, lost civilizations, or alien beings hiding in the hollow core of our planet? Explore the mythology and folklore surrounding this premise.

30m

## Lost Was the Key

Perhaps the most in-depth video on a single alien abduction. In this case, the subject is Leah Haley, a CPA and an author of several books, including *Lost Was the Key*. While the story sounds fairly fantastic—abductions by both aliens and the military, the downing of an alien spacecraft while Haley was aboard, and communication with several different types of entities—the discussion is presented intelligently and will hold your interest throughout.

95m **Director:** Thomas Tulien; **M:** Thomas Dougherty.

## The Magic and Mystery of Giant Rock

Explores the history and legend of Giant Rock, California, where George Van Tassel made contact with alien beings.

60m

## Marc Davenport: Visitors from Time

Author Marc Davenport presents his hypothesis that many UFOs are craft that transcend the space-time dimension.

115m



## Masters of the Stars

This *Messengers of Destiny* sequel offers continued coverage of the daylight discs over Mexico City.

70m?C

## Messengers of Destiny

The July 11th, 1991, solar eclipse allegedly prophesied by Mayan priests in 755 C.E. ushered in a wave of UFO sightings over Mexico City that were videotaped by so many people that even *A Current Affair* has covered it. The sightings continue to the point of being considered normal and everyday occurrences by the residents. In addition to the video footage, this tape also follows an international team of UFO investigators as they track the sightings and attempt to correlate the event(s) to the ancient prophecies.

1992 75m **Writer:** Brit Elders, Lee Elders.

## The Miami Contacts

Covers the claims of a Florida man who has taken photos and video of craft from the Pleiades, and who also says he is the son of Pleiadian beings.

60m

## Miracle of the Unknown: Spiritual & Multidimensional Realities Explored in . . . UFOs

Filmmaker Yin Gazda's two-part series on the cosmological perspective of the UFO phenomenon.

120m

## Mysterious Two

Eerie atmosphere is everything in this network TV movie about a beatific, middle-aged couple called He and She, who entice a cult-like following of plain folks toward a

desert rendezvous point where the space brothers will supposedly take them to a cosmic paradise. Loosely based on Heaven's Gate cult founder Marshall Applewhite, who led members in a March 1997 mass suicide prompted by the appearance of comet Hale-Bopp, behind which the cult believed was a UFO on which they would travel in the afterlife.

1982 100m John Forsythe, Priscilla Pointer, Noah Beery Jr., Vic Tayback, James Stephens, Karen Werner, Robert Englund, Robert Pine; **Director:** Gary Sherman.

## The Mystery of the Crop Circles: Messages from Another World?

Magazine editor Michael Hesemann covers the crop circle phenomenon in England, especially near ancient sites such as Stonehenge, with aerial footage, amateur video, and interviews with UFO researchers.

120m

## Official Denial

Cable TV-movie follows one of the more interesting alien-abduction theories from Whitley Strieber's book *Communion*. Average Joe has been repeatedly seized and examined by schwa-type humanoids. The Air Force—whose bedside manner is hardly any warmer—is watching, however, and shoot down the saucer with a Reagan "Star Wars" satellite. The one surviving little grey man won't talk, however, so our victimized hero is brought in for a face-to-face confrontation.

1993 86m Parker Stevenson, Erin Gray, Dirk Benedict, Chad Everett; **Director:** Brian Trenchard-Smith; **Writer:** Bruce Zabel.

## One on One on UFOs

Three-part series ("Government Cover-Ups & Secret Bases"; "Alien Abductions"; "The Phenomenon of Crop Circles") examines various aspects of UFO phenomenon through

expert interviews, photographic evidence, and eyewitness accounts.

190m

## Out There

Unemployed photojournalist buys obsolete camera at a yard sale and discovers the 25-year-old film shows pictures of a flying saucer encounter and abduction by schwa aliens. Attempts to verify the photos plunges him into an underground of crackpots, Hollywood has-beens, tabloid reporters, and insane conspiracies. Gag topics in this cable-made farce touch on such arcane matters as the Ada computer compiler, Nixon's hidden heroism, and *THX-1138*.

**1995 (PG-13) 98m** Bill Campbell, Wendy Schaal, Julie Brown, David Rasche, Paul Dooley, Bill Cobbs, Bob(cat) Goldthwait, Rod Steiger, June Lockhart, Jill St. John, Carel Struycken, Billy Bob Thornton, P.J. Soles; **Director:** Sam Irvin; **Writer:** Thomas Strellich, Alison Nigh.

## The Philadelphia Experiment

According to legend, in 1943 the U.S. destroyer Eldridge was involved in a WWII experiment to make it radar invisible. Not only did the Eldridge disappear from the radar screens, it completely vanished! Two of the sailors from the vessel reappear in the year 1984 and as they try to figure out where they are, one of them has trouble holding it all (his molecules, that is) together and vanishes. The other (Michael Pare) is captured by the military, escapes, finds romance and an old friend or two, and discovers that they are trying to duplicate the 1943 experiment in 1984. Based on the book by William L. Moore and Charles Berlitz.

**1984 (PG) 101m** Michael Pare, Nancy Allen, Eric Christmas, Bobby DiCicco, Michael Currie, Louise Latham; **Director:** Stewart Raffill; **Writer:** William Grey, Michael Janover.

## The Pleiadian Connection

Have beings from the Pleiades star system visited our planet and influenced our history? This program covers Eduard Billy Meier's claims of contact with Pleiadian beings and craft and the impact of these visitors on mankind.

60m

## Preparing for Contact

Lyssa Royal channels a lecture by Germane that explains how humans can prepare for contact with alien civilizations.

50m

## Project: Alien

Cattle mutilations, scary abductions, and sightings of strange figures in spacesuits—it's enough to send rival reporters off on a race to blow open a government coverup of what seems like attacks by beings from space. What's actually happening revolves around tests of deadly biological weapons. Sf fans in search of a good extraterrestrial flick may feel let down by this teaser, shot in Yugoslavia (under the title *No Cause for Alarm*) as more of a breezy romantic caper.

**1989 (R) 92m** Michael Nouri, Darlanne Fluegel, Maxwell Caulfield, Charles Durning; **Director:** Frank Shields; **Writer:** Anthony Able.

## PSI Factor

Civilian NASA researcher observes and records signals from planet Sirius B. Subsequently he and his spouse are dogged by glowing UFOs and nosy government goons.

**1980 91m** Peter Mark Richman, Gretchen Corbett, Tommy Martin; **Director:** Bryan Trizers; **Writer:** Quentin Masters.

UFO

FILMS AND  
DOCUMENTARIES

675



## The Return

Jan-Michael Vincent and Cybill Shepherd meet as adults and discover that they had both, as children, been visited by aliens who had given technology to a cattle-mutilating prospector. A mess with no idea of what sort of film it wants to be.

**1980 (PG) 91m** Cybill Shepherd, Raymond Burr, Jan-Michael Vincent, Martin Landau, Vincent Schiavelli, Zachary Vincent, Farah Bunch, Neville Brand, Susan Kiger; **Director:** Greydon Clark.

## Rods: Mysterious Objects Among Us

Explores the mysterious aerial phenomenon known as rods, fast-moving, cigar- or spear-shaped objects witnessed in the skies.

**90m**

## Roswell: The Naked Truth: The Jim Ragsdale Story

Roswell resident Jim Ragsdale, upon his deathbed, tells of witnessing the crash of a flying saucer and retrieval of its alien inhabitants in 1947.

**60m**

## Roswell Remembered

Examines all aspects of the famous 1947 incident, including Project Mogul weather balloons and evidence of a government coverup.

**70m**

## Roswell: The U.F.O. Cover-Up

Fact-based drama finds intelligence officer Major Jesse Marcel (Kyle MacLachlan) investigating the wreckage of a craft near his Roswell, New Mexico, air base in the summer of 1947. Marcel believes the craft is extraterrestrial—as are the strange bodies recovered from the wreckage. An Air Force press release announces a UFO but is quick-

ly retracted and Marcel's suspicions ridiculed. A 30-year reunion still finds him obsessed and seeking to clear his name but this time Marcel's investigations may finally lead to the truth. Made for TV; based on the book *UFO Crash at Roswell* by Kevin D. Randle and Donald R. Schmitt.

**1994 (PG-13) 91m** Kyle MacLachlan, Dwight Yoakam, Kim Greist, Martin Sheen, Xander Berkeley, J.D. Daniels, Doug Wert, John M. Jackson, Peter MacNicol, Bob Gunton, Charles Martin Smith; **Director:** Jeremy Paul Kagan; **Writer:** Jeremy Paul Kagan, Arthur Kopit, Paul Davids.

## Scientific Analysis of UFOs

University of Omaha physics and astronomy professor Dr. Jack Kasher presents intriguing evidence that mysterious objects videotaped by the crew of the space shuttle Discovery during a September 1991 mission are indeed intelligently directed spacecraft. Includes actual NASA footage.

**199? 90m**

## Secrets of Dreamland

Another documentary about the activities being conducted in at Area 51 (also known as Dreamland) and the super-secret military operations, worldwide data control systems, mind-control experiments and weaponry, and super aeronautics and avionic programs underway there. This one does have one heck of a twist. Norio Hayakawa, a former director for the Civilian Intelligence Network (a group that evaluates government black projects and covert operations), believes that all of the above are part of a secret government plan to stage a fake alien attack, creating world-wide panic, allow marshall law(s) to be put into effect, and bring about the arch fear of the conspiracy theorist . . . the New World Order. Lots of photographs and film footage lend support. Followed by *Secrets of Dreamland 2* in which Hayakawa continues on, delving into the Christian myth and how it relates to

extraterrestrials, the one-world government, and, of course, Area 51.

1995 m

## **A Strange Harvest with Linda Moulton Howe**

Linda Moulton Howe's documentary on animal (and sometimes human) mutilations around the world is crammed full of photos, film, and interviews. Various angles are explored as to whom the culprit(s) is/are. In all cases, an eye, ear, tongue, teeth, jaw flesh, genitals, and the rectum have been removed. There is never any blood or even tracks around the body. Experts testify that the excisions have been accomplished with technology that we may not have, sometimes cutting literally in between cells. Witnesses interviewed talk of moving lights, silent helicopters, and even non-human entities in the areas of mutilations. This documentary will stun and is not for the squeamish. Updated in *A Strange Harvest 1993*.

**1980 60m Director:** Linda Moulton Howe; **Writer:** Linda Moulton Howe.

## **UFO Diaries**

Compelling six-part series tackles a variety of issues surrounding UFO phenomena, including evidence of visitations on Earth and elsewhere in the solar system, secrets of astronauts and other government officials, Area 51, and other mysteries.

1996 330m

## **UFO Files: Contacts and Abduction**

Explores the stories of people who claim to have been contacted or abducted by extraterrestrial beings. Are these people cons, or are they telling the truth?

88m

## **UFO Files: Cover-Up**

Provides insight into secret government investigations of UFOs and alleged conspiracies to hide UFO evidence. Includes coverage of the Roswell incident.

86m

## **UFO & Paranormal Phenomenon**

What do UFOs have to do with religion, psychic ability, faith healing, near-death experiences, and other phenomena? Five-part series examines the theory that alien influence is evident in human paranormal experiences. Includes information on the cooperation of CIA and KGB officials with alien beings.

300m

## **UFO Secret: The Roswell Crash**

The alleged crash of an alien spacecraft in Roswell, New Mexico, is probably the most famous incident in the annals of UFOology. Tales of the cover-up have persisted for years; many documentaries and even a movie was made on the 1947 occurrence. The research of Kevin Randle and Don Schmitt, considered by many to be experts about Roswell, provides lots of information; and interviews with several witnesses make this in-depth report interesting.

**1993 50m Director:** Mark Wolfe; **Writer:** Mark Wolfe.

## **UFO Secrets of the Third Reich**

This video uses film footage, photos, charts, and documents to explore the occult connections of Hitler's Third Reich. Tracing what Hitler felt was his heritage, from the Knights Templar through Uranus 13, a basic history of several secret societies is given. Claiming that the Reich had the knowledge and technology to build "flying discs" is



one thing, but showing film footage of a BMW saucer flying around is another.

**60m** *Director:* Thomas L. Fink; *Writer:* Jurgen Rathofer, Ralf Ettl.

## UFO Sightings: Alien Bases on the Moon

Researcher Fred Steckling presents photographic evidence of possible alien-built structures and activity on the moon, and investigator Michael Lindemann explores tales of aliens working for the U.S. government.

**64m**

## UFO: The Untold Stories

Two-part series examines several UFO mysteries, including military encounters, compelling video and photographic evidence, investigations by the former Soviet Union, and even proven hoaxes.

**120m**

## Uforia

Good ol' boy Fred Ward meets up with a UFO-obsessed girl named Arlene (Cindy Williams). Their budding romance is threatened by Ward's friend, a crooked evangelist (Harry Dean Stanton) who sees Arlene's UFO-babble as a potential money-making scheme. Stanton intends to use Arlene's prophecies of impending extraterrestrial contact to bilk his revivalist audiences. The humor is sometimes clumsy, but works often enough to make for fun viewing.

**1981 92m** Cindy Williams, Harry Dean Stanton, Fred Ward, Hank Worden; *Director:* John Binder; *Writer:* John Binder.

## UFOs: Above and Beyond

*Star Trek's* James Doohan hosts this documentary on various UFO phenomena, including UFO water landings, alien probes, dema-

terializing alien craft, UFO cave paintings, Area 51, and other incidents. Includes an interview with supposed former government scientist Bob Lazar and other researchers and specialists.

**50m**

## UFOs and the Alien Presence

Fast-paced, compelling documentary covers several aspects of UFO evidence and possible alien encounters. Hosted by Michael Lindemann.

**35m**

## UFOs: The Best Evidence

Three-part series gives a comprehensive overview of UFO phenomena, including worldwide evidence of UFO sightings, UFO encounters and crop circles, and government conspiracies to hide UFO evidence.

**210m**

## UFOs and Channeling

Do humans have the power to communicate with aliens using the powers of the mind? Meet some alien contactees who claim to do just that.

**50m**

## UFOs: Encounters and Abductions

In-depth investigation into the world of UFOs. Examines evidence and provides eyewitness accounts, photographs, and rare UFO footage. Also examines evidence that suggests that there are government cover-ups in place.

**1996 100m**

## UFOs and the Global Situation

Covers UFO phenomena from around the world, including well-documented close encounters, alien warnings, abductions, and

supposed government acknowledgment of an alien presence.

80m

### **UFOs: It Has Begun**

Are the origins of the human race tied to aliens? This documentary speculates that humans were brought to earth by beings from a dying planet.

97m

### **UFOs: The Secret Evidence**

Researcher/author Michael Hesemann presents evidence of UFO encounters, including 44 rare film clips from around the world. Includes interviews with Col. Wendelle Stevens, Zecharia Sitchin, Bob Lazar, Robert Dean and others.

110m

### **UFOs: Secrets of the Black World**

Covering the same subject as Norio Hayakawa's *Secrets of Dreamland* tapes, this video offers even more information on Area 51, the famous site of many UFO sightings and alleged storehouse of "alien" knowledge, craft, E.T.s, and a possible cloning site. The German film crew gives us interviews with top scientists, engineers, and security personnel who claim to have seen the "goods" (including the aliens, who are in cahoots with the government). Good footage of the rather remarkable maneuvers of craft, whether they are alien or earthmade.

135m

### **UFOs & Underground Bases**

Are underground bases in the southwestern U.S. linked to the government's secret UFO program? Researcher William Hamilton pre-

sents eyewitness testimony on the activities as well as those of major aerospace companies.

120m

### **Undeniable Evidence**

Colin Andrews tours actual crop circle formations and argues for their authenticity.

60m

### **Update on Alien Phenomenon**

Filmmaker Linda Moulton Howe gives a public presentation on crop circles, alien communications, animal mutilations and an alleged UFO crash retrieval case.

110m

### **Visitors from Space**

Explores evidence of alien craft and extraterrestrial beings on earth, including landing sites and medical examinations of abductees.

56m

### **Voyagers of the Sixth Planet**

Is a Mayan prophecy behind the mysterious rash of UFO sightings over Mexico in 1991? Explore this mystery with extraordinary film footage and eyewitness testimony. A second sequel to *Messengers of Destiny*.

60m

### **Whitley Strieber's Breakthrough: Beyond Transformation**

Author Whitley Strieber discusses his ongoing relationship with extraterrestrial entities.

108m





## UFO BOOKS

This list contains select nonfiction and fiction UFO-related books currently available in print. Because the range of science fiction novels is so broad, only titles that specifically deal with human encounters with UFOs or alien beings as a phenomenon are included. For further information on specific UFO-related phenomena, consult the Sources lists at the end of each entry in the book's main section.

### UFO Nonfiction

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*Abducted!: The Story of the Intruders Continues* by Debbie Jordan and Kathy Mitchell. Carroll & Graf, 1994.

*Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens* by John E. Mack. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994.

*Above Top Secret: The Worldwide UFO Cover-Up* by Timothy Good. William Morrow & Co., 1988.

*The Alien Abduction Survival Guide: How to Cope with Your ET Experience* by Michelle Lavigne. Wild Flower Press, 1995.

*Alien Agenda: Investigating the Extraterrestrial Presence among Us* by Jim Marrs. HarperCollins, 1997.

*The Alien Book of Truth: Who Am I? What Am I Doing? Why Am I Here?* by Ida M. Kannenberg. Wild Flower Press, 1994.

*Alien Contact: Top-Secret UFO Files Revealed* by Timothy Good. Quill, 1994.

*Alien Contacts and Abductions: The Real Story from the Other Side* by Jenny Randles. Sterling, 1994.

*Alien Discussions: Proceedings of the Abduction Study Conference* edited by Andrea Pritchard, David E. Pritchard, John E. Mack, Pam Kasey, and Claudia Yapp. North Cambridge Press, 1994.

*Alien Encounters* by Chuck Missler and Mark Eastman. Harvest House, 1997.

*Alien Encounters (Mysteries of the Unknown Series)*. Time Life, 1992.

*Alien Harvest: Further Evidence Linking Animal Mutilations and Human Abductions to Alien Life Forms* by Linda Moulton Howe. Self-published, 1993.

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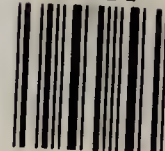
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